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THE

LIFE AND WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS

G. Pirie

The carlin claught her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS

Edited by ROBERT CHAMBERS

Revised by WILLIAM WALLACE

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME III

THE WAVERLEY BOOK COMPANY, LIMITED,
96 and 97 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

By arrangement with W. & R. CHAMBERS, LIMITED,
London and Edinburgh.

PREFATORY NOTE.

WHILE the plan of the third volume of Dr Chambers's *Life and Works of Robert Burns* has been adhered to in the New Edition, the volume itself has been rewritten and greatly enlarged to include fresh biographical matter and nearly thirty letters which are now for the first time given a place in the Life of the poet. Among these are several discovered in London, which are of very great importance, disclosing as they do a remarkable controversy that Burns had, while at Ellisland, with opponents whom he termed 'The London News-men,' and showing that Henry Dundas, the chief 'dispenser of patronage' in Scotland at the end of last century, was not specially well affected towards the greatest of his contemporaries. I have followed up certain lines of inquiry which suggested themselves to Dr Chambers before his death, and so have obtained new light upon Burns's *liaison* with Helen Anne Park, who inspired 'Yestreen I had a pint o' wine,' and upon his political views and action at the period of the French Revolution. I have been able to secure and embody either in text or in notes much accurate and hitherto unpublished information relating to the numerous persons mentioned in the poems and letters written by Burns or connected with his life in Ellisland and Dumfries. I am greatly indebted to Mr R. B. Adam of Buffalo, United States, for permission to include in this work three letters forming part of his large and valuable collection of Burns MSS., and to Mr Hew Morrison of the Edinburgh Public Library, in whose custody this collection now is, for giving me copies of them. I have also to thank the Rev. Richard Simpson, Dunscore Manse, Dumfriesshire; Mr A. H. Millar, Dundee; Dr James Colville, Glasgow; and Mr James Lennox and Mr Thomas Watson, Dumfries, for the assistance of various kinds that they have so cordially rendered me.

W. W.

CONTENTS—VOL. III.

CHAPTER I.

Ellisland (1789-90).

Ellisland: the farm, the house, and surroundings—Dunscore parish—Letter to Mrs Dunlop—'Elegy on the year 1788: "For Lords or Kings I dinna mourn"'—Letters to Dr Moore, Ainslie, M'Murdo, and Dugald Stewart—'The Poet's Progress'—Burns's relations with his publisher—Letters to Lady Elizabeth Cunningham and [Henry Erskine (?)]—'Extempore to Captain Riddel: "Your News and Review, Sir, I've read through and through, Sir"'—'Caledonia, a Ballad'—Letters to Blair, Cleghorn, Cunningham, Bishop Geddes, and James Burness—'Uncle Robert'—Burns visits Edinburgh: a further 'racking of accounts' with Creech—Letters from and to William Burns—Letter to Mrs M'Lehose: a defence—James Mylne, farmer and poet: letters from and to Rev. Patrick Carfrae—Letters to Mrs Dunlop and Dr Moore—A parish library: letter to Peter Hill—An unwritten incident in Burns's life: his connection with *Stuart's Star*: his contributions, poetical and prose: 'Ode, sacred to the memory of Mrs Oswald of Auchencruive;' 'Address of the Scottish Distillers to Pitt;' 'Ode to the Departed Regency-Bill, 1789;' 'Stanzas of Psalmody'—Letters to Mrs M'Murdo and Mrs Dunlop—'Sketch, inscribed to Charles James Fox'—Letter to Cunningham: verses 'On seeing a fellow wound a hare'—Letters to William Burns, Graham of Fintry, and Lady Betty Cunningham—Dr Gregory's 'iron justice'—Rhyming Epistle 'To James Tennant of Glenconner'—Letters to M'Aulay, Ainslie, Mrs Dunlop, and Graham of Fintry—Correspondence with Helen Maria Williams: criticism of *The Slave Trade*—'Nonsense under the name of Scottish poetry'—Letters to Sillar and Logan—'The Kirk's Alarm'—Poet, farmer, exciseman—'To Graham of Fintry, on receiving a favour'—Burns's second son born—Letters to Peter Stuart and Mrs Dunlop—Two merry episodes: 'Willie brew'd a peck o' maut;' 'The Whistle'—Letter to the Duke of Queensberry—Anniversary of the death of Mary Campbell: 'To Mary in Heaven'—Rhyming correspondence with Dr Blacklock—Francis Grose, 'Hear, Land o' Cakes, and brither Scots'—Letters to Grose and Dugald

PAGE

Stewart—'Ken ye aught o' Captain Grose?'—Burns as exciseman: anecdotes—Letters to Ainslie, Brown, and William Burns—The Dumfries Burghs election of 1790: 'Election ballad for Westerha': "The Laddies by the banks o' Nith;"' Letter to Graham of Fintry; 'The five Carlins: "There was five Carlins in the South"'—Letters to Mrs Dunlop, Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable, and Provost Maxwell—Jean Jaffray: 'The blue-eyed lassie'—Letter to Lady Elizabeth Cunningham 13–140

CHAPTER II.

Ellisland, 1790.

'New-Year's Day Sketch:' to Mrs Dunlop—'Prologue for Sutherland: "No song nor dance I bring from yon great city"'—Letters to Gilbert Burns, Dunbar, and Mrs Dunlop—Correspondence renewed with Mrs M'Lehose: 'My lovely Nancy'—A Second 'Prologue for Sutherland: "What needs this din about the town o' Lon'on?"'—Letter to Staig—*The Scots Musical Museum*, Vol. III. issued: Burns's Contributions: Preface; 'Tibbie Dunbar;' 'The gardener wi' his paidle;' 'Highland Harry;' 'Beware o' bonie Ann;' 'John Anderson, my jo;' 'The Battle o' Sherramoor;' 'Blooming Nelly;' 'My heart's in the highlands;' 'The banks of Nith;' 'Tam Glen'—Letter to Hill: 'Lovely (Miss) Burns'—Letter to Nicol: 'Elegy on Willie Nicol's mare'—*The Star* again: Rhyming Epistles to Stuart—'The gowden locks of Anna: "Yestreen I had a pint o' wine"'—Letters to Cunningham, Hill, Mrs Dunlop, and Dr Moore—Dumfries burghs election: 'Second Epistle to Graham: "Fintry, my stay in worldly strife"'—Matthew Henderson: his 'Elegy' and 'Epitaph'—Letters to Mrs Dunlop, Cunningham, and Miss Craik—The management of Ellisland—Anderson's *Bee*—Death of William Burns: Letter from Murdoch—Letter to Graham—An 'excise-fraud:' Case of Thomas Johnston—Letter to Craufurd Tait—'Tam o' Shanter'—Letter to Grose: 'witch-stories relating to Alloway Kirk'—Letter to Mrs Dunlop: 'On the birth of a posthumous child' 141–226

CHAPTER III.

Ellisland, 1791.

Letters to Dunbar and Hill—Burns's circumstances—Letter to Cunningham: 'Elegy on Miss Burnet: "Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize"'—Letters to Mrs Dunlop, Rev. Archibald Alison, and Mrs Graham: 'my poetry will considerably outlive my poverty'—'Lament of Mary Queen of Scots'—Letters to Dr Moore and Rev.

PAGE

George H. Baird: Michael Bruce's *Poems*—Letter to Cunningham: 'There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame'—A 'contest with the London News-men:' Burns, the Duchess of Gordon, and Henry Dundas—Death of James, Earl of Glencairn: The 'Lament'—Letters to Dalziel, Lady Elizabeth Cunningham, Lady Harriot Don, and Hill—Accident to Burns—Birth of his third son—Letters to Mrs Dunlop, Alexander Fraser Tytler, and Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable—The Glenriddel MSS.—Letters to Hill and Findlater: 'Miller's kindness has been just such another as Creech's'—The 'Clarke' case: Letters to Moodie, Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Williamson, and Cunningham—Literary scolding: 'Thou Eunuch of Language'—'Third Epistle to Graham of Fintry: "Late crippl'd of an arm, and now a leg"'—'Poem on pastoral poetry'—Renewal of correspondence with Mrs M'Lehose: 'Sweet Sensibility, how charming'—Letter to Sloan: roup at Ellisland—Celebration 'in honour' of the poet Thomson: Letter to the Earl of Buchan; 'Address to the shade of Thomson: "While virgin spring by Eden's flood"'—Letters to Miss Davies: 'Lovely Davies;' 'The bonie wee thing'—Letters to Ballantyne, Fullarton, Corbet, and Sharpe of Hoddam—The library at Dunscore—Burns's letter in *The Statistical Account*—'A Fragment: On Glenriddel's fox breaking his chain'—'To Maxwell of Terraughty, on his birthday'—Ellisland unprofitable—The lease cancelled—Removal of the Burns family to Dumfries..227-297

CHAPTER IV.

Dumfries (November 1791—July 1793).

Dumfries in 1791—Letter to Ainslie—The last visit to Edinburgh—More correspondence with Mrs M'Lehose: 'Ae fond kiss and then we sever;' 'Behold the hour, the boat, arrive;' 'Ance mair I hail thee, thou gloomy December'—Letter to Mrs Dunlop: 'Song of Death'—'O May, thy morn was ne'er sae sweet;' 'My Nanie's awa;' 'Wandering Willie'—Maria Banks Woodley Riddel—The stone over Fergusson's grave: the account—'Ill-fated genius! Heaven-taught Fergusson!'—Letters to Cunningham and Clarke—'The de'il's awa wi' th' Exiseman'—Burns and the French Assembly (incident of the four carronades)—Proposal for a new edition of the *Poems:* letter to Creech—Letters to Johnson, Stephen Clarke and Mrs Dunlop: 'Bonie Lesley'—Letters to Cunningham and Corbet—George Thomson: his proposal for a collection of Scottish songs—Burns promises his assistance—*The Scots Musical Museum*, Vol. IV. issued: Burns's contributions: Preface; 'Craigieburn Wood;' 'O meikle thinks my love o' my beauty;' 'What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man;' 'How can I be blythe and glad;' 'I do confess thou art sae fair;' 'O for ane an' twenty, Tam;' 'Bessy and her spinnin-wheel;' 'Nithsdale's

PAGE

welcome hame;' 'Fair Eliza;' 'O luve will venture in;' 'The banks o' Doon;' 'Willie Wastle;' 'Bonie Bell;' 'The deuk's dang o'er my daddie;' 'She's fair and fause'—Letter to Mrs Dunlop—Birth of a daughter to Burns—Correspondence with Thomson: 'The lea-rig;' 'My wife's a winsome wee thing;' 'Highland Mary'—Miss Fontenelle: 'The Rights of Woman'—Helen Anne Park—Correspondence with Thomson (continued): 'The Lea-rig' (*second version*); 'Auld Rob Morris;' 'Duncan Gray'—Dumfries in Burns's time—Mrs M'Lehose again—Burns and *The Edinburgh Gazetteer*—'Here's to them that's awa'—Letters to Mrs Dunlop and Graham of Fintry—'Extempore on some commemorations of Thomson'—'O poortith cauld and restless love;' 'Galla Water;' 'Lord Gregory'—Letters from and to Nicol; to Cunningham (containing a 'Political Catechism') and Mrs M'Lehose—'Wandering Willie'—'Open the door to me'—Miss Benson of York—The Poet is made a Freeman of Dumfries—The new edition of the *Poems:* Letters, with presentation copies, to the Earl of Glencairn, Miller, Riddel, Mrs Graham of Fintry, M'Murdo, and White—'Wandering Willie' (*final version*)—The war in France: 'On General Dumouriez' desertion from the French Republican army: "You're welcome to Despots, Dumouriez"'—Letter to Erskine of Mar: Burns's political creed—'Young Jessie'—'The Soldier's Return'—'Meg o' the Mill'—'The last time I came o'er the moor'—Letters to Mrs Riddel and Ainslie—Burns removes to the Mill Vennel—Letters to Hill and Thomson: 'Blythe hae I been on yon hill'—Letters to Miss Lesley Baillie and Miss Davies—'Logan Braes'—'O were my love yon Lilac fair'—'Bonie Jean: "There was a lass and she was fair"' (two versions)—Letters to Mr M'Murdo and Miss M'Murdo—Burns and remuneration for his contributions to Johnson's and Thomson's Collections.....298-440

APPENDICES.

I. Additional Ellisland Letters [To William Dunbar (two), Alexander Cunningham, and Gavin Hamilton (?)].....441

II. The Subscription-list to the Second Edition of the Poems.....446

III. Burns and the Excise.....448

IV. Some Collections of Burns MSS. [The Glenriddel MSS.; The Afton MSS.; List of the Pieces inserted in Bishop Geddes's interleaved copy of the first Edinburgh edition of the *Poems*].....453

V. Variations in Text of Poems.....460

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

'The carlin claught her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.'—(*page* 220.)

G. Pirie.

Etched by F. Huth.....*Frontispiece*

'It is the moon, I ken her horn.'

G. Ogilvy Reid, A.R.S.A.....*Page* 102

'Blythe Bessie, in the milking shiel.'

C. Martin Hardie, R.S.A.....*Page* 342

'I'll meet thee on the lea-rig
My ain kind Dearie, O.'

W. D. M'Kay, R.S.A.....*Page* 368

The Soldier's Return.

C. Martin Hardie, R.S.A.....*Page* 418

LIFE AND WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS.

CHAPTER I.

ELLISLAND, 1789–90.

ALTHOUGH Burns did not occupy the house which had been erected under his supervision even for some time after the arrival of his wife from Ayrshire, he had now become familiar with his surroundings. He would have been the first to admit that Ellisland, where he was to live for three years, was in many respects better fitted to stimulate his imagination than even Mossgiel. The farm might be 'the very riddlings of Creation,' but the situation of the house itself was emphatically worthy of 'a poet's choice.' Six miles from Dumfries, and not far from the old coach-road to Glasgow, Burns's house stood* above the western bank of

* It is to be feared that we must say 'stood,' for Mr Taylor, into whose hands the property passed in 1805, remodelled the whole steading, and there is good reason to believe that the dwelling-house was altered. Commenting on the letter of Burns, written on March 14, 1788, in which he says, 'I begin at Whitsunday to build a house,' Mr Grierson of Dalgoner, a local antiquary, who knew Burns, has written, 'This cottage was pulled down in 1812 by Mr Taylor, who died in 1825.' Referring to the present farmhouse of Ellisland, the Rev. Richard Simpson, minister of Dunscore parish, wrote to the *Glasgow Herald* of January 21, 1896: 'This habitation, commodious and substantial as it once was, is now showing signs of decay. There is talk of its being rebuilt, and some very wise people are protesting loudly against the desecration threatened to the roof-tree of Burns. They forget, or they do not know, that they are exactly eighty-four years too late. But, say they, there is a window bearing on its panes an inscription written with a diamond by the poet while he resided there. This is a great attraction for visitors, and the legend about it is duly accepted. But a careful examination raises more than a doubt as to whether these straggling uneven letters were engraved by the same hand that cut the lines, so beautifully clear in execution as in expression, on the window of the hermitage of

the Nith, which forms for nearly two miles the eastern boundary of the parish of Dunscore. The river, whose course is uniformly beautiful from its source in the wilds of New Cumnock to its junction with the Solway, is nowhere more suggestive of pastoral peace than here. From the level holms the ground slopes gently back to a ridge, on one of whose points, according to a tradition that modern heresy has not quite shaken, Agricola is believed to have established a fort. This height, 700 feet above the sea, commands a view extended in one direction from Birrenswark to Cairnsmuir of Carsphairn, and in another from the Lowthers across the Solway to Skiddaw. The bank of the river opposite Ellisland is so low and level that the afternoon sun casts the shadow of the house and its surrounding trees far across the holms on the other side of the stream. The mansion-house of Dalswinton,* with its memories of the Red Comyn, rises beyond these holms out of a wood, on the outskirts of which lies Foregirth, which might have been more of 'a farmer's choice' had Burns taken to its fertile acres in preference to the stony fields and beautiful site of Ellisland.

Dunscore parish is full of historical memories. It might be

Friars' Carse. There is a slight resemblance in some of the letters to the writing of Burns, but it appears to be intentional rather than natural. The inscription is Pope's line,

"An honest man 's the noblest work of God,"

which was a great favourite with Burns. The diamond has been drawn through the word "man" and "lass" written in above, while that again has been erased, and "woman" substituted. One can hardly believe that the poet would attempt to improve in this childish way a verse and a sentiment for which, as for the author, he had the greatest veneration. The names of "Miss Jean Lorimer, Kemys Hall," and "John Gillespie," are also inscribed on the glass, but in a handwriting having no resemblance to that of Burns. These also have been repeatedly scored through. The explanation given of the appearance of these names here is that Burns tried to further the suit of Gillespie, a brother gauger, with the fair "Chloris," whose home was but a short way off across the Nith. Whoever wrote the names, it was clearly not the poet, although it can be understood that William Lorimer's well-known smuggling propensities may have attracted the attention of more than one officer of excise, while his daughter's charms inspired more than one fine song of the Ellisland bard.' Although the soil of the farm was and is stony, it is even worse in other portions of the parish. The farm of Moss-side, adjoining the minister's glebe, was taken some time ago by an Ayrshire farmer. The first season that his cattle were there they all went lame. Stroquhan (pronounced 'Stro whan'), the name of a considerable estate in the neighbourhood, is said to mean 'a place of stones.'

* Dalswinton is situated in the parish of Kirkmahoe, and Mr Miller, finding it inconvenient to have a portion of his property absolutely detached from the rest—the river could only be crossed by Auldgirth Bridge, three miles distant, in the building of which Thomas Carlyle's father is said to have had a hand—sold Ellisland to Mr Morin of Laggan, who entered into possession when Burns removed to Dumfries. Dalswinton is now the property of Mr W. M'Alpine Leny, whose family acquired it by purchase in 1820.

rash to dogmatise upon the antiquity of what used to be pronounced a Druidical stone circle and a lake dwelling. But its glens are steeped in the story of the War of Independence—of Wallace, of Bruce, and of Bruce's friend and 'mak siccar' lieutenant, Kirkpatrick, to whose family Ellisland once belonged. The hillsides of Dunscore recall the more recent memories of the Covenanters. The tower of Lag, the prototype of Redgauntlet Castle and the home of Sir Robert Grierson, 'the persecutor,' whose name was more feared and hated in Galloway than that of John Graham himself, still stands in one of its glens. The persecutor is buried in the old churchyard of Dunscore, which stands on a height about a mile from Ellisland. Near the heap of rubbish, which is all that marks his grave, is the tomb of his kinsman, James Grierson of Dalgoner, who favoured the Covenanters. Half a mile to the south of Ellisland stands the tower of the Isle,* close to the modern mansion-house which looks out on the links of the Nith and across the meadows of Kirkmahoe to the Tinwald hills, and near which Burns lived till his house was ready. Scarcely so far up the stream is Friars' Carse, with its Hermitage, the residence, as has already been seen, of the poet's friend Riddel. Two miles above it is Auldgirth Bridge; farther still, on the Closeburn side of the river, is Brownhill, once an inn sometimes visited by Burns, and close to it is Dinning, the farm which his brother Gilbert occupied when he left Mossgiel. Travelling up the valley, we come to Thornhill, with Tynron Doon, recalling the memories of the Ettrick Shepherd, Drumlanrig Castle, the dark hills that watch over Enterkin and Durisdeer, Sanquhar, with the ruins of Crichton Peel, and the bold bulk of the hill of Corsincon emphasising the boundary between the two counties which between them share the chief memories that are associated with the name of Burns.

The extreme eastern point of Dunscore parish is Ellisland; the extreme western point is Craigenputtock, looking out on the moors of Galloway, where Carlyle wrote *Sartor Resartus* and his Essay

* Perhaps the most reasonable derivation of the word 'Ellisland' is that suggested by Mr John Carlyle Aitken of Kirkcudbright, who writes: 'Query, Ellisland = the Laird of Isle his land, Isle's land, Ailisland, Ellisland?' Isle, which adjoins Ellisland on the south, is a much larger property. Ellisland is at present the property of Dr Taylor of Dunkeld, and is tenanted by a family of the name of Grierson. The rent was originally £150, but has been reduced to £130. It is an estate as well as a farm, and is at the present moment one of the fifty-six separate properties in the parish of Dunscore.

on Burns. It was on the slopes of Craigenputtock Hill that Carlyle, conversing with Emerson, put the Iliad of 'this mysterious mankind' into a nutshell: 'Christ died on the tree; that built Dunscore kirk yonder; that brought you and me together. Time has only a relative existence.' The massive square tower of the church which Carlyle and Emerson saw occupies a commanding position in the village of Cottack, now usually called Dunscore, midway between Ellisland and Craigenputtock, and looks down on the west upon the valley of Glenesslin, and on the north upon that of Glencairn, with the green braes of Maxwelton, the home of 'Annie Laurie.'* With the exception of Tweedside, there is not in Scotland a more thoroughly ideal region for a poet to live in than that in which Burns began to feel himself at home in the beginning of 1789.

On New-year's morning Gilbert Burns thus addressed his brother:

Mossgiel, 1*st Jan.* 1789.

Dear Brother—I have just finished my new-year's day breakfast in the usual form, which naturally makes me call to mind the days of former years, and the society in which we used to begin them; and when I look at our family vicissitudes, 'thro' the dark postern of time long elapsed,' I cannot help remarking to you, my dear brother, how good the

* Dunscore churchyard contains a tombstone which—unless local tradition and belief are to be altogether discredited—recalls a most important crisis in the history of Burns. It is that of James Whyte, a retired Jamaican planter, proprietor of Over Stroquhan, an estate about two miles west of the parish church, who died in 1822 at the age of ninety. Before he removed to Dunscore, he resided in Glaisnock, near Cumnock, and there is good reason to believe that it is he who is alluded to in the letter (see Vol. I., p. 385) addressed to 'Mons. James Smith, Mauchline,' and dated 'Mossgiel, Monday morning, 1786,' in which this passage occurs: 'I found the doctor with a Mr and Mrs White, both Jamaicans, and they have deranged my plans altogether.' This view is supported by notes on a copy of Cromek's *Reliques*, which was once the property of James Grierson of Dalgoner (b. 1753, d. 1843), a local laird of literary tastes who, as has been noted, knew Burns when he lived in Ellisland, and who states of James Smith that he 'went to St. Lucia and died there.' The church in which the Rev. Joseph Kirkpatrick ministered from 1777 to 1806, when he removed to Wamphray, and which Burns attended till he was offended by the minister's sermon on the centenary of the Revolution, was built in 1649. It was replaced by the present building in 1823. A stone in the north-east corner, bearing the words: 'How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!' and the date 1649, is all that remains of the earlier building. The old church had only a little belfry, not a tower. Its bell, not a very powerful one, is still used in the new church. 'If Burns chose to return from church by a longer, but more lovely, walk down the Cairn, he would pass the picturesque church of Irongray, where Helen Walker, the original Jeanie Deans, is buried; and a little farther on, within sight of Lincluden Abbey, might greet Helen herself at her cottage door, for she died in this house in 1791.'—Dr James Colville, in *Glasgow Herald*, January 20, 1894.

GOD of SEASONS is to us; and that, however some clouds may seem to lour over the portion of time before us, we have great reason to hope that all will turn out well.

Your mother and sisters, with Robert the second, join me in the compliments of the season to you and Mrs Burns, and beg you will remember us in the same manner to William, the first time you see him. I am, dear brother, yours, GILBERT BURNS.

The poet on the same day wrote

TO MRS DUNLOP.*

ELLISLAND, *New-year-day morning*, 1789.

This, Dear Madam, is a morning of wishes; and would to GOD that I came under the Apostle James's description!—'The effectual, fervent Prayer of a *righteous man* availeth much.' In that case, Madam, you should welcome in a Year full of blessings: every thing that obstructs or disturbs tranquillity and self-enjoyment should be removed, and every Pleasure that frail Humanity can taste should be yours. I own myself so little a Presbyterian that I approve of set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of Devotion for breaking in on that habituated routine of life and thought which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of Instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere Machinery. This Day; the first Sunday of May; a breezy, blue-skyed noon sometime about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end, of Autumn; these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of Holidays. Not like the Sacramental, Executioner-face of a Kilmarnock Communion; but to laugh or cry, be cheerful or pensive, moral or devout, according to the mood and tense of the Season and Myself. I believe I owe this to that glorious Paper in the Spectator, 'The vision of Mirza,' a Piece that struck my young fancy before I was capable of fixing an idea to a word of three syllables. 'On the fifth day of the moon which, according to the custom of my forefathers, I always *keep holy*, after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hill of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer,' &c.

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our Souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one shall be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on Minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favorite flowers in Spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the hare-bell, the foxglove, the wild brier-rose, the budding birk and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud, solitary whistle of the Curlew in a

* The previous print of this letter has been compared with the original, which was for some time in the hands of Mr Hew Morrison of the Edinburgh Public Library. The variation in line 7 of the poetry will be noted.

summer noon, or the wild, mixing cadence of a troop of grey-plover in an Autumnal-morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of Devotion or Poesy. Tell me, my dear Friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery that, like the Eolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident? Or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to these proofs of those awful and important realities, a God that made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a World of weal or woe beyond death and the grave, these proofs that we deduct by dint of our own powers and observation. However respectable Individuals in all ages have been, I have ever looked on Mankind in the lump to be nothing better than a foolish, headstrong, credulous, unthinking Mob; and their universal belief has ever had extremely little weight with me. Still I am a very sincere believer in the Bible; but I am drawn by the conviction of a Man, not the halter of an Ass.

Apropos to an Ass, how do [you] like the following Apostrophe to Dulness, which I intend to interweave in 'The Poet's progress?'

O Dulness, portion of the truly blest!
Calm, shelter'd haven of eternal rest!
Thy sons ne'er madden in the fierce extremes
Of Fortune's polar frost or torrid beams.
If mantling high she fills the golden cup,
With sober, selfish ease they sip it up;
Conscious their great success they well deserve,
They only wonder 'some folks' do not starve:
The sage, grave hern thus, easy, picks his frog,
And thinks the mallard a sad, worthless dog.
When Disappointment snaps the thread of hope;
When, through disastrous night, they darkling grope;
With deaf endurance sluggishly they bear,
And just conclude that 'Fools are Fortune's care.'
So, heavy, passive to the tempest's shocks,
Strong on the sign-post stands the stupid ox.
Not so the idle Muses' madcap train,
Not such the workings of their moon-struck brain:
In equanimity they never dwell,
By turns in soaring Heaven or vaulted Hell.

I have sketched two or three verses to you, but as a private opportunity offers immediately, I must defer transcribing them. A servant of mine goes to Ayrshire with this, but I shall write you by Post. If I am to be so happy as have it in my power to see you when I go to Ayr-fair, which I very much doubt, I will try to dine at Dunlop in the Wednesday of that week.

If it is good weather in the fair-week, I shall try my utmost; for if I hit my aim aright, it will not be in my power in any given time again. Farewell! ROBT. BURNS.

Early in the year there appeared in several provincial newspapers an

ELEGY ON THE YEAR 1788.

For Lords or Kings I dinna mourn, — don't
E'en let them die—for that they 're born!
But oh, prodigious to reflec'!
A *Towmont*, Sirs, is gane to wreck! — twelvemonth
O *Eighty-eight*, in thy sma' space
What dire events hae taken place!
Of what enjoyments thou hast reft us!
In what a pickle thou hast left us!

The Spanish empire 's tint a head,* — lost
An' my auld teethless Bawtie 's † dead;
The tulzie's teugh 'tween Pitt an' Fox, — fight
An' oor gudewife's wee birdy cocks: — small
The tane is game, a bluidy devil, — one
But to the hen-birds unco civil; — very
The tither 's dour, has nae sic breedin', — other—obstinate
But better stuff ne'er claw'd a midden!

Ye ministers, come mount the pupit, — pulpit
An' cry till ye be hearse an' roupit, — hoarse with shouting
For *Eighty-eight* he wish'd you weel,
An' gied you a' baith gear an' meal: — gave—money
E'en mony a plack and mony a peck, — coin
Ye ken yoursels, for little feck — know—value, consideration

Ye bonny lasses, dight your e'en, — dry—eyes
For some o' you hae tint a frien':
In *Eighty-eight*, ye ken, was taen
What ye 'll ne'er hae to gie again.

Observe the very nowt an' sheep, — cattle
How dowff an' dowie now they creep; — dull—sad
Nay, even the yirth itsel does cry, — earth
For Embro wells are grutten dry.‡ — Edinburgh—wept

* Charles III., king of Spain, died 13th December 1788.

† A generic familiar name for a dog in Scotland.

‡ The Edinburgh newspapers of the day contain references to a scarcity of water in consequence of severe frost.

O *Eighty-nine!* thou 's but a bairn, child
An' no owre auld, I hope, to learn! too
Thou beardless boy, I pray tak care,
Thou now has got thy Daddy's chair,
Nae hand-cuff'd, mizl'd, hap-shackl'd *Regent*,* muzzled—foot-bound
But, like himsel, a full free agent.
Be sure ye follow out the plan
Nae waur than he did, honest man!— worse
As muckle better as you can. much

January 1, 1789.

A letter to Dr Moore shows the state of Burns's mind at this time. Already apprehensive as to the soundness of his farming speculation, he was using influence to obtain an Excise appointment for the district in which he resided. He gives his opinions as to literary labour, which are remarkably sound and judicious, and indicates his desire to persevere in his poetical mission.

TO DR MOORE.

ELLISLAND, *near Dumfries, 4th Jan.* 1789.

SIR—As often as I think of writing to you, which has been three or four times every week these six months, it gives me something so like the idea of an ordinary-sized statue offering at a conversation with the Rhodian Colossus, that my mind misgives me, and the affair always miscarries somewhere between purpose and resolve. I have at last got some business with you, and business letters are written by the style-book. I say my business is with you, Sir, for you never had any with me, except the business that benevolence has in the mansion of poverty.

The character and employment of a poet were formerly my pleasure but are now my pride. I know that a very great deal of my late *éclat* was owing to the singularity of my situation and the honest prejudice of Scotsmen; but still, as I said in the preface to my first edition, I do look upon myself as having some pretensions from Nature to the poetic character. I have not a doubt but the knack, the aptitude, to learn the muses' trade is a gift bestowed by Him 'who forms the secret bias of the soul;'—but I as firmly believe that *excellence* in the profession is the fruit of industry, labour, attention and pains. At least, I am resolved to try my doctrine by the test of experience. Another appearance from the press I put off to a very distant day, a day that may

* The king having shown symptoms of unsound mind in November, the country was at this time agitated by discussions as to the propriety of appointing a regent. Pitt and his party were for restricting the power of the proposed regent—the Prince of Wales.

never arrive—but poesy I am determined to prosecute with all my vigour. Nature has given very few, if any, of the profession, the talents of shining in every species of composition. I shall try (for until trial it is impossible to know) whether she has qualified me to shine in any one. The worst of it is, by the time one has finished a piece it has been so often viewed and reviewed before the mental eye, that one loses, in a good measure, the powers of critical discrimination. Here the best criterion I know is a friend—not only of abilities to judge, but with good-nature enough, like a prudent teacher with a young learner, to praise perhaps a little more than is exactly just, lest the thin-skinned animal fall into that most deplorable of all poetic diseases—heart-breaking despondency of himself. Dare I, Sir, already immensely indebted to your goodness, ask the additional obligation of your being that friend to me? I inclose you an essay of mine in a walk of poesy to me entirely new: I mean the epistle addressed to R. G., Esq., or Robert Graham, of Fintry, Esq., a gentleman of uncommon worth, to whom I lie under very great obligations. The story of the poem, like most of my poems, is connected with my own story, and to give you the one, I must give you something of the other. I cannot boast of Mr Creech's ingenuous, fair dealing to me. He kept me hanging about Edinburgh from 7th August 1787 until the 13th April 1788 before he would condescend to give me a statement of affairs; nor had I got it even then but for an angry letter I wrote him, which irritated his pride. 'I could' not a 'tale' but a detail 'unfold,' but what am I that I should speak against the Lord's anointed Bailie of Edinburgh?

I believe I shall, in whole, £100 copy-right included, clear about £400 some little odds; and even part of this depends upon what the gentleman has yet to settle with me. I give you this information, because you did me the honor to interest yourself much in my welfare. I give you this information, but I give it to yourself only, for I am still much in the gentleman's mercy. Perhaps I injure the man in the idea I am sometimes tempted to have of him—God forbid I should! A little time will try, for in a month I shall go to town to wind up the business if possible.

To give the rest of my story in brief: I have married 'my Jean,' and taken a farm: with the first step I have every day more and more reason to be satisfied; with the last, it is rather the reverse. I have a younger brother, who supports my aged mother, another still younger brother and three sisters in a farm. On my last return from Edinburgh, it cost me about £180 to save them from ruin. Not that I have lost so much—I only interposed between my brother and his impending fate by the loan of so much. I give myself no airs on this, for it was mere selfishness on my part: I was conscious that the wrong scale of the balance was pretty heavily charged, and I thought that throwing a little filial piety and fraternal affection into the scale in my favour might help to smooth matters at the *grand reckoning*. There is still one thing would make my circumstances quite easy: I have an excise

officer's commission, and I live in the midst of a country division. My request to Mr Graham, who is one of the commissioners of excise, was, if in his power, to procure me that division. If I were very sanguine, I might hope that some of my great patrons might procure me a Treasury warrant for supervisor, surveyor-general, &c.

Thus, secure of a livelihood, 'to thee, sweet poetry, delightful maid' I would consecrate my future days. R. B.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

Ellisland, *Jan.* 6, 1789.

Many happy returns of the season to you, my dear Sir! May you be comparatively happy up to your comparative worth among the sons of men; which wish would, I am sure, make you one of the most blest of the human race.

I do not know if passing a 'Writer to the signet' be a trial of scientific merit or a mere business of friends and interest. However it be, let me quote you my two favorite passages, which, though I have repeated them ten thousand times, still they rouse my manhood and steel my resolution like inspiration.

> ————On Reason build resolve,
> That column of true majesty in man.—*Young.*
>
> Hear, Alfred, hero of the state,
> Thy genius heaven's high will declare;
> The triumph of the truly great
> Is never, never to despair!
> Is never to despair!—*Masque of Alfred.**

I grant you enter the lists of life to struggle for bread, business, notice and distinction, in common with hundreds. But who are they? Men, like yourself, and of that aggregate body, your compeers, seven-tenths of them come short of your advantages natural and accidental; while two [-tenths] of those that remain, either neglect their parts, as flowers blooming in a desert, or mis-spend their strength, like a bull goring a bramble bush.

But to change the theme: I am still catering for Johnson's publication, and, among others, I have brushed up the following old favorite song a little, with a view to your worship. I have only altered a word here and there; but if you like the humor of it, we shall think of a stanza or two to add to it:—

* The *Masque of Alfred*, written by David Mallet and James Thomson in conjunction, was produced in 1740. It contains the song 'Rule Britannia.'

ROBIN SHURE IN HAIRST.

I gaed up to Dunse — went
To warp a wab o' plaiden, — web—woollen cloth
At his daddie's yett — gate
Wha met me but Robin?

Chorus—Robin shure in hairst, — sheared—harvest
I shure wi' him:
Fient a heuk had I, — Never a reaping-hook
Yet I stack by him.

Was na Robin bauld,
Tho' I was a cotter,
Play'd me sic a trick,
And me the Eller's dochter? — (church-) elder's daughter

Robin promis'd me
A' my winter vittle; — food
Fient haet he had but three — Not a thing
Goose-feathers and a whittle!* — knife

R. B.

Reference has been already made to John M'Murdo, chamberlain to the Duke of Queensberry. Mr M'Murdo resided with his family in the ducal mansion of Drumlanrig, a few miles from the poet's farm, and there he entertained Burns.

TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ.,

INCLOSING A SONG.

ELLISLAND, *9th Jany.* 1789.

SIR—A Poet and a Beggar are in so many points of view alike, that one might take them for the same individual character under different designations, were it not that though, with a very trifling Poetic licence, Poets may be styled Beggars, yet the converse of the proposition does not hold, that every Beggar is a Poet. In one particular, however, they remarkably agree: if you help either the one or the other to a mug of Ale or the picking of a bone, they will very willingly repay you with a song. This occurs to me at present, as I have just dispatched a well-lined rib

* Ainslie was a 'writer.'

of J. Kilpatrick's Highlander,* a bargain for which I am, in the style of our Ballad-printers, 'Five excellent new songs' in your debt.

The inclosed is nearly my newest song, and one that has cost me some pains, though that is but an equivocal mark of its excellence. Two or three others I have by me, shall do themselves the honor to wait on you at your after leisure: petitioners for admission into favor must not harass the condescension of their Benefactor.

You see, Sir, what it is to patronise a Poet. 'Tis like being a magistrate in a petty-borough: you do them the favor to preside in their Council for one year, and your name bears the prefatory stigma of 'Bailie' for life.

With, not the compliments, but the best wishes, the sincerest prayers of the season for you, that you may see many happy years with Mrs M'Murdo and your family — two blessings, by the by, to which your rank does not entitle you—a loving wife and fine family being almost the only good things of this life to which the farm-house and cottage have an exclusive right—I have the honour to be, sir, your much indebted and very humble servant, R. BURNS.

TO PROFESSOR DUGALD STEWART.†

ELLISLAND, *near Dumfries, 20th Jany.* 1789.

SIR—The enclosed sealed packet I sent to Edinburgh a few days after I had the happiness of meeting you in Ayrshire, but you were gone for the Continent. I have now added a few more of my productions, those for which I am indebted to the Nithsdale Muses. The piece inscribed to R—— G——, Esq., is a copy of verses I sent Mr Graham of Fintry, accompanying a request for his assistance in a matter, to me, of very great moment. To that gentleman I am already doubly indebted: for deeds of kindness of serious import to my dearest interests, done in a manner grateful to the delicate feelings of Sensibility. This Poem is a species of Composition new to me; but I do not intend it shall be my last essay of the kind, as you will see by 'The Poet's Progress.' These fragments, if my design succeed, are but a small part of the intended whole. I propose it shall be the work of my utmost exertions ripened by years; of course I do not wish it much known. The fragment beginning 'A little, upright, pert, tart,' &c., I have not shown to man living till I now send it you. It is the postulata, the axioms, the definition, of a Character, which, if it appear at all, shall be placed in a variety of lights. This particular part I send you merely as a sample of my hand at portrait-sketching; but, lest idle Conjecture should pretend to point out the Original, please let it be for your single, sole inspection.

* Kilpatrick was the name of a neighbouring blacksmith.

† Various corrections in this letter are made from the original MS., at present (1896) in the hands of Mr Hew Morrison. 'The Poet's Progress' is not with the letter.

Need I make any apology for this trouble to a gentleman who has treated me with such marked benevolence and peculiar kindness, who has entered into my interests with so much zeal, and on whose critical decisions I can so fully depend? A Poet as I am by trade, these decisions are to me of the last consequence. My late transient acquaintance among some of the mere rank and file of Greatness, I resign with ease; but to the distinguished Champions of Genius and Learning I shall be ever ambitious of being known. The native genius and accurate discernment in Mr Stewart's critical strictures; the justness (iron justice, for he has no bowels of compassion for a poor poetic sinner) of Dr Gregory's remarks and the delicacy of Professor Dalziel's taste,* I shall ever revere. I shall be in Edinburgh sometime next month. I have the honor to be, Sir, your highly obliged and very humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

We learn from this letter that Burns meditated a laborious poem, to be entitled 'The Poet's Progress,' probably of an autobiographical nature. It will be found that he incorporated the poem in his 'Third Epistle to Graham of Fintry.'

THE POET'S PROGRESS.

A POEM *in embryo.*

Thou, Nature, partial Nature, I arraign;
Of thy caprice maternal I complain.
The peopled fold thy kindly care have found,
The horned bull, tremendous, spurns the ground;
The lordly lion has enough and more,
The forest trembles at his very roar;
Thou giv'st the ass his hide, the snail his shell,
The puny wasp, victorious, guards his cell.
Thy minions, kings defend, controul, devour,
In all th' omnipotence of rule and power:
Foxes and statesmen subtile wiles ensure;
The cit and polecat stink, and are secure:
Toads with their poison, doctors with their drug,
The priest and hedgehog, in their robes, are snug:
E'en silly women have defensive arts,
Their eyes, their tongues—and nameless other parts.

* Professor of Greek in the Edinburgh University. See Vol. II., pp. 60, 79.

But O thou cruel stepmother and hard,
To thy poor fenceless, naked child, the Bard!
A thing unteachable in worldly skill,
And half an idiot too, more helpless still:
No heels to bear him from the op'ning dun,
No claws to dig, his hated sight to shun:
No horns but those by luckless Hymen worn,
And those, alas! not Amalthea's horn:
No nerves olfact'ry, true to Mammon's foot,*
Or grunting, grub† sagacious, evil's root:
The silly sheep that wanders wild astray
Is not more friendless, is not more a prey:
Vampire-booksellers drain him to the heart,
And viper-critics cureless venom dart.

Critics! appall'd I venture on the name,
Those cut-throat bandits in the paths of fame,
Bloody dissectors, worse than ten Monroes:‡
He hacks to teach, they mangle to expose:
By blockhead's daring into madness stung,
His heart by wanton, causeless malice wrung,
His well-won bays—than life itself more dear—
By miscreants torn, who ne'er one sprig must wear;
Foil'd, bleeding, tortur'd in th' unequal strife,
The hapless Poet flounces on thro' life,
Till, fled each hope that once his bosom fired,
And fled each Muse that glorious once inspir'd,
Low-sunk in squalid, unprotected age,
Dead even resentment for his injur'd page,
He heeds no more the ruthless critics' rage.

So by some hedge the generous steed deceas'd,
For half-starv'd, snarling curs a dainty feast:
By toil and famine worn to skin and bone,
Lies, senseless of each tugging bitch's son.

. . . . . .

* No sense of smell to enable him, like a sleuth-hound, to track the footsteps of Mammon. Cf. 'Keen on the badger foot of Mammon.'

† Or grub, like grunting pigs (or 'Grub-street hacks'), for money, the root of all evil.

‡ Alexander Monro, secundus, was coadjutor (1755), then successor to his father, Alexander Monro, primus (died 1767), as professor of anatomy and surgery in Edinburgh University. He died in 1817.

A little, upright, pert, tart, tripping wight,
And still his precious self his dear delight;
Who loves his own smart shadow in the streets
Better than e'er the fairest *she* he meets;
Much specious lore, but little understood
(Veneering oft outshines the solid wood),
His solid sense by inches you must tell,
But mete his cunning by the Scottish ell!
A man of fashion, too, he made his tour,
Learn'd 'vive la bagatelle et vive l'amour:'
So travell'd monkies their grimace improve,
Polish their grin—nay, sigh for ladies' love!
His meddling vanity, a busy fiend,
Still making work his selfish craft must mend.

. . . . . .

Crochallan came:
The old cock'd hat, the brown surtout—the same;
His grisly beard just bristling in its might
('Twas four long nights and days from shaving-night!)
His uncomb'd, hoary locks, wild-staring, thatch'd
A head for thought profound and clear unmatch'd;
Yet, tho' his caustic wit was biting-rude,
His heart was warm, benevolent and good.

. . . . . .

O Dulness, portion of the truly blest!
Calm, shelter'd haven of eternal rest!
Thy sons ne'er madden in the fierce extremes
Of Fortune's polar frost or torrid beams;
If mantling high she fills the golden cup,
With sober, selfish ease they sip it up;
Conscious the bounteous meed they well deserve,
They only wonder 'some folks' do not starve!
The grave, sage hern thus easy picks his frog,
And thinks the mallard a sad worthless dog.
When disappointment snaps the thread of Hope,
When, thro' disastrous night, they darkling grope,
With deaf endurance sluggishly they bear,
And just conclude that 'fools are Fortune's care;'

So, heavy, passive to the tempests' shocks,
Strong on the sign-post stands the stupid ox.
Not so the idle Muses' mad-cap train,
Not such the workings of their moon-struck brain :
In equanimity they never dwell,
By turns in soaring heaven or vaulted hell !

It is only too clear from a remark and quotation in a subsequent letter, that this selfish, superficial 'upright, pert, tart, tripping wight' was Creech—the same 'Willie' whom Burns had described in such affectionate terms in May of the previous year, and to whom he then wished 'a pow as auld's Methusalem.' Creech's dawdling over his accounts, his keen tenacity of his own interests in every transaction and the resolute stinginess which lurked under a complaisant manner, had combined to disgust Burns entirely with a man whom he at first looked upon as a kind patron, and an agreeable man of talent and character. It will be seen that, on a second settlement of accounts in February, Burns was satisfied with the measure of justice extended to him by the bookseller, and in May wrote him a civil letter. Disgust and antipathy, however, again got the upper hand, till once more reconciliation was effected, and remained unbroken. It is possible that Creech behaved badly to Burns, and it was only an occasional show of fairness that disarmed the poet's resentment. If some of his old associates in the literary trade are to be credited, he was hardly capable of treating Burns with justice. On the other hand, Currie seems to have been convinced that there was no adequate reason to blame the publisher. He says in a letter to Messrs Cadell and Davies, Dec. 30, 1797 : 'It is true there was a difference between our high-souled poet and Mr Creech, and some of Burns's friends have a notion that Mr Creech did not use him liberally. For my own part, I have found the correspondence among Burns's papers, and I can see no proof of any ill-usage. The bard indulged occasionally in sarcasms against men of character; yet I can discover that his deliberate opinions were the result of a judgment profound and nearly unbiassed, and differing much from the effusions of his sensibility. Among the Edinburgh characters drawn by him, I think I can discover that of our friend Creech (for the names are not given at length in his

Diary); and if I do not deceive myself, it is a capital likeness, and on the whole favourable.' It is said that the letters of Burns to Creech—many of them containing charges against the publisher—were finally submitted to Mrs Hay (Margaret Chalmers), who exerted her influence to have them destroyed; which was done. Dr Currie, a few days after the above date, wrote to the same gentleman: 'Mr Creech informs me that whatever little difference subsisted between Burns and him had been made up long before the bard's death, and that he shall do everything in his power to serve the family.'

TO MR MORISON, WRIGHT, MAUCHLINE.

ELLISLAND, *Jan.* 22, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR—Necessity obliges me to go into my new house even before it be plastered. I will inhabit the one end until the other is finished. About three weeks more, I think, will, at farthest, be my time, beyond which I cannot stay in this present house. If ever you wished to deserve the blessing of him that was ready to perish; if ever you were in a situation that a little kindness would have rescued you from many evils; if ever you hope to find rest in future states of untried being—get these matters of mine ready. My servant will be out in the beginning of next week for the clock. My compliments to Mrs Morison. I am, after all my tribulation, Dear Sir, yours, R. B.

TO LADY ELIZABETH CUNNINGHAM.*

ELLISLAND, *near Dumfries, 22d Janry.* 1789.

MY LADY—As the officious gratitude of a poor creature, however it may be a little troublesome, can never be disagreeable to a good heart, I have ventured to send your Ladyship this packet. That from a dabbler in rhymes I am become a professed Poet; that my attachment to the Muses is heated into enthusiasm; that my squalid Poverty is changed for comfortable independence, is the work of your Ladyship's noble Family. Whether I may ever make my footing good, on any considerable height of Parnassus, is what I do not know; but I am determined to strain every nerve in the trial. Though the rough material of fine writing is undoubtedly the gift of Genius, the workmanship is as certainly the united effort of labor, attention and pains.

* From a copy of the original in the Library of the University of Edinburgh.

Nature has qualified few, if any, to shine in every walk of the Muses: I shall put it to the test of repeated trial whether she has formed me capable of distinguishing myself in any one.

In the first great concern of life, the means of supporting that life, I think myself tolerably secure. If my farm should not turn out well, which after all it may not, I have my Excise-Commission in reserve. This last is comparatively a poor, poor resource, but it is luxury to anything the first five and twenty years of my life taught me to expect; and I would despise myself if I thought I were not capable of sacrificing any one little liquorish gratification on the altar of Independence. A little spice of indolence excepted, I thank Heaven there is not any species of dissipation that I cannot set at defiance. The indolent reveries of a bemused mind are indeed the sins that easily beset me; but, like the noxious vapours that annoy miners, I am afraid they are evils that necessarily rise from my very Profession.

The inclosed Poems are favors of the Nithsdale Muses. The piece inscribed to R—— G——, Esq., is a copy of verses which I sent to Mr Graham of Fintry, with a request for his assistance to procure me an Excise Division in the middle of which I live. On my return from Edinburgh last, I found my aged mother, my brothers and sisters, on the brink of ruin with their farm; and as I am certain the remainder of their lease will be worth holding, I advanced them nearly one-half of my capital to keep their little Commonwealth together and place them in comfort. My own farm here I am pretty sure will in time do well: but for several years it will require assistance more than my own pocket can afford. The Excise salary would pay half my rent, and I could manage the whole business of the Division without five guineas of additional expense.

I shall be in Edinburgh in about a month, when I shall do myself the honor to inform your Ladyship farther of these, to me, important matters, as I know your Goodness will be interested in them.

In all my domestic concerns I find myself extremely comfortable. I muse and rhyme, morning, noon and night; and have a hundred different poetic plans, pastoral, georgic, dramatic, &c., floating in the regions of fancy, somewhere between purpose and resolve. To secure myself from ever descending to anything unworthy of the independent spirit of Man or the honest pride of Genius, I have adopted Lord Glencairn as my tutelar Protector, what your scholars call by the Heathen name of *Dii penates*, I think it is. I have a large shade of him, with the verses I intended for his picture, wrote out by Butterworth, pasted on the back; and a small shade of him, both by Miers, set in a gold breast-pin, with the words 'Mon Dieu et toi' engraved on the shell. The first I have hung over my parlour chimney-piece; the last I keep for gala days. I have often, during this hard winter, wished myself a Great Man, that I might, with propriety in the etiquette of the world, have enquired after Lady Glencairn's health. One of the sons of little men as I am, I can only wish fervently for her welfare; or, in my

devouter moods, pray for her, in the charming language of Mackenzie,* that 'the Great Spirit may bear up the weight of her grey hairs and blunt the arrow that brings them rest.'

I shall not add to this unconscionable letter by a tedious apology or anything more than assuring your Ladyship that with the warmest sincerity of heartfelt, though powerless, gratitude, I have the honor to be, my Lady, your Ladyship's deeply indebted and ever grateful humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

TO [THE HON. HENRY ERSKINE (?).]

ELLISLAND, 22*d January* 1789.†

SIR—There are two things which, I believe, the blow that terminates my existence alone can destroy—my attachment and propensity to poesy and my sense of what I owe to your goodness. There is nothing in the different situations of a Great and a Little man that vexes me more than the ease with which the one practises some virtues that to the other are extremely difficult or perhaps wholly impracticable. A man of consequence and fashion shall richly repay a deed of kindness with a nod and a smile or a hearty shake of the hand; while a poor fellow labours under a sense of gratitude, which, like copper coin, though it loads the bearer, is yet of small account in the currency and commerce of the world. As I have the honour, sir, to stand in the poor fellow's predicament, with respect to you, will you accept of a device I have thought on to acknowledge these obligations I can never cancel? Mankind in general agree in testifying their devotion, their gratitude, their friendship or their love, by presenting whatever they hold dearest. Everybody who is in the least acquainted with the character of a Poet knows that there is nothing in the world on which he sets so much [*value as his verses. I have resolved, sir, from time*‡] to time, as she may bestow her favours, to present you with the productions of my humble Muse. The enclosed are the principal of her works on the banks of the Nith. The Poem inscribed to R. G., Esq., is some verses, accompanying a request, which I sent to Mr Graham, of Fintry—a gentleman who has given double value to some important favours he has bestowed on me by his manner of doing them, and on whose future patronage, likewise, I must depend for matters to me of the last consequence.

I have no great faith in the boasted pretensions to intuitive propriety and unlaboured elegance. The rough material of Fine Writing is certainly the gift of Genius; but I as firmly believe that the workmanship

* Henry Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling*.

† Misdated *1788* in the original.

‡ Supplied on conjecture, to make up a blank in the original.

is the united effort of Pains, Attention and Repeated-trial. The piece addressed to Mr Graham is my first essay in that didactic, epistolary way; which circumstance, I hope, will bespeak your indulgence. To your friend Captain Erskine's strictures I lay claim as a relation; not, indeed, that I have the honour to be akin to the peerage, but because he is a son of Parnassus.*

I intend being in Edinburgh in four or five weeks, when I shall certainly do myself the honour of waiting on you, to testify with what respect and gratitude, &c., R. B.

On returning a newspaper containing some strictures on his poetry, which Captain Riddel had sent to him, Burns added a note in impromptu verse which indicates at once his facility in composition and his disbelief in the permanent value of ordinary criticism:

EXTEMPORE TO CAPTAIN RIDDEL,

ON RETURNING A NEWSPAPER.†

ELLISLAND: *Monday Even:*

Your News and Review, Sir, I 've read through and through, Sir,
With little admiring or blaming:
The Papers are barren of home-news or foreign,
No murders or rapes worth the naming.

Our friends the Reviewers, those Chippers and Hewers,
Are judges of mortar and stone, Sir;
But of MEET or UNMEET, in a FABRIC complete,
I 'll boldly pronounce they are none, Sir.

My Goose-quill too rude is to tell all your goodness
Bestowed on your servant, The Poet;
Would to God I had one like a beam of the Sun,
And then all the World, [Sir,] should know it!

ROBT. BURNS.

* Captain Andrew Erskine, youngest son of Alexander, fifth Earl of Kellie, had settled in Edinburgh after having served for some time in the army; assisted George Thomson with his *Collection;* and published his own correspondence with James Boswell (1763). He drowned himself in the river Forth in 1793.

† The MS. of this is now in the Liverpool Public Library.

TO CAPTAIN RIDDEL.

[ELLISLAND, 1789.]

SIR—I wish from my inmost soul it were in my power to give you a more substantial gratification and return for all your goodness to the poet, than transcribing a few of his idle rhymes. However, 'an old song,' though to a proverb an instance of insignificance, is generally the only coin a poet has to pay with.

If my poems which I have transcribed and mean still to transcribe, into your book, were equal to the grateful respect and high esteem I bear for the gentleman to whom I present them, they would be the finest poems in the language. As they are, they will at least be a testimony with what sincerity I have the honor to be, Sir, Your devoted humble Servant,

R. B.

Here we have the first mention of a collection of MSS. which Burns had promised to form for his friend of Friars' Carse, and to contain which either himself or Riddel had procured two quarto volumes—one designed for poetry, the other for prose. The transcribing of pieces continued for several years.*

An invitation to Burns from Riddel was sent in rhyme:

DEAR BARD—
To ride this day is vain,
For it will be a steeping rain,
So come and sit with me:
We 'll twa or three leaves fill up with scraps,
And whiles fill up the time with cracks,
And spend the day with glee.

R. R.

Burns wrote on the back:

ELLISLAND.

Dear Sir, at ony time or tide
I 'd rather sit wi' you than ride,
Tho' 'twere wi' royal Geordie:
And trowth, your kindness, soon and late,
Aft gars me to mysel look blate— makes—bashful
The Lord in Heaven reward ye!

R. BURNS.

* See Appendix, No. IV.; also notes in the concluding volume of this work.

TO MR JAMES JOHNSON.

CALEDONIA, A BALLAD.

TUNE—'*Caledonian Hunt's delight*'—*Mr Gow's.*

There was on a time, but old Time was then young,
That brave Caledonia, the chief of her line,
From some of your northern deities sprung,
(Who knows not that brave Caledonia's divine?)
From Tweed to the Orcades was her domain,
To hunt or to pasture, or do what she would;
Her heavenly relations there fixèd her reign,
And pledged her their godheads to warrant it good.

A lambkin in peace, but a lion in war,
The pride of her kindred the Heroine grew;
Her grandsire, old Odin, triumphantly swore,
'Who e'er shall provoke thee th' encounter shall rue!'
With tillage or pasture at times she would sport,
To feed her fair flocks by her green rustling corn;
But chiefly the woods were her fav'rite resort,
Her darling amusement the hounds and the horn.

Long quiet she reigned, till thitherward steers
A flight of bold eagles from Adria's strand:*
Repeated, successive, for many long years
They darkened the air and they plundered the land.
Their pounces were murder, and horror their cry,
They 'd ravag'd and ruin'd a world beside;
She took to her hills and her arrows let fly,
The daring invaders they fled or they died.

The Camelon savage disturb'd her repose†
With tumult, disquiet, rebellion and strife;
Provok'd beyond bearing, at last she arose,
And robb'd him at once of his hopes and his life:

* The Romans.

† Burns, who has before spoken of Camelon, near Falkirk, as the capital of the Picts (see Vol. II., p. 150), was, like his contemporaries, accustomed to regard the Scots alone as

The Anglian lion, the terror of France,
Oft prowling ensanguin'd the Tweed's silver flood;
But, taught by the bright Caledonian lance,
He learnèd to fear in his own native wood.

The fell Harpy-raven took wing from the North,*
The scourge of the seas and the dread of the shore;
The wild Scandinavian boar† issu'd forth,
To wanton in carnage and wallow in gore:
O'er countries and kingdoms their fury prevail'd,
No arts could appease them, no arms could repel;
But brave Caledonia in vain they assail'd,
As Largs‡ well can witness and Loncartie§ tell.

Thus bold, independent, unconquer'd and free,
Her bright course of glory for ever shall run;
For brave Caledonia immortal must be—
I 'll prove it from Euclid as clear as the sun:
Rectangle-triangle the figure we 'll chuse,
The Upright is Chance and old Time is the Base;
But brave Caledonia 's the Hypothenuse;
Then, Ergo, she 'll match them, and match them always. ||

I shall be in Edinburgh, my dear Sir, in about a month, when we shall overhaul the whole Collection and report progress. The foregoing I hope will suit the excellent air it is designed for.

Adieu till we meet, ROBT. BURNS.¶

ELLISLAND, 23*rd Jany.* [1789].

the forefathers of the later Scottish nation, and the Picts, accordingly, as aliens and enemies. Bellenden's *Cronicles*, the vernacular version of Boece's history, repeated in many popular forms, describes at length the siege, capture, and destruction of Camelon by Kenneth Macalpin (referred to A.D. 839) as the final subversion and practical extirpation of the Picts, and their disappearance from history. This is, of course, wholly unhistorical. In most editions of Burns's poems 'Camelon savage' appears as 'Cameleon savage,' which is unintelligible.

* The Danes.

† The Norsemen.

‡ Alexander III. defeated Haco at Largs in 1263.

§ Kenneth III., according to Boece (but no earlier authority), defeated the Danes with slaughter at Luncarty, four miles from Perth, in 990.

‖ Allusion is here made to Euclid's familiar proposition, according to which in a right-angled triangle the square of the hypothenuse is always equal to the squares of the two other sides.

¶ Collated with the MS.—now in the National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh. Johnson did not include the ballad in his *Museum*.

TO MR DAVID BLAIR, GUNMAKER, ST PAUL'S SQUARE, BIRMINGHAM.

Ellisland, 23*rd Jany.* 1789.

My dear Sir—My honor has lain bleeding these two months almost, as 'tis near that time since I received your kind, though short, epistle of the 29th Oct. The defensive tools * do more than half mankind do, they do honor to their maker; but I trust that with me they shall have the fate of a miser's gold—to be often admired but never used.

Long before your letter came to hand, I sent you, by way of Mr Nicol, a copy of the book and a proof-copy of the print loose among the leaves of the book. These, I hope, are safe in your possession some time ago. If I could think of any other channel of communication with you than the villainous expensive one of the Post, I could send you a parcel of my Rhymes, partly as a small return for your kind, handsome compliment, and much more as a mark of my sincere esteem and respect for Mr Blair. A piece I did lately I shall try to cram into this letter, as I think the turn of thought may perhaps please you.

[Written in Friars' Carse Hermitage, on the Banks of the Nith, December 1788.]

I remember with pleasure, my dear Sir, a visit you talked of paying to Dumfries, in Spring or Summer. I shall only say I have never parted with a man, after so little acquaintance, whom I more ardently wished to see again. At your first convenience, a line to inform me of an affair in which I am much interested—just an answer to the question, How you do? will highly oblige, my dear Sir, yours very sincerely,

Robt. Burns.

TO MR ROBERT CLEGHORN.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 23*rd Janry.* 1789.

I must take shame and confusion of face to myself, my dear friend and brother farmer, that I have not written you much sooner. The truth is, I have been so tossed about between Ayrshire and Nithsdale that, till now I have got my family here, I have had time to think of nothing—except now and then a distich or stanza as I rode along. Were it not for our gracious monarch's cursed tax of postage, I had sent you one or two Pieces of some length that I have lately done. I have no idea of the *Press*. I am now able to support myself and family, though in a humble, yet an independent way; and I mean, just at my leisure, to pay my court to the tuneful sisters, in hopes that they may one day

* Burns here probably alludes to a pair of pistols which he gave to his medical attendant, Dr William Maxwell, whose daughter is said to have presented them to Dr Gillis, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Glasgow, who in turn presented them to the Society of Scottish Antiquaries on 24th January 1859.

enable me to carry on a Work of some importance. The following are a few verses I wrote in a neighbouring Gentleman's Hermitage, to which he is so good as let me have a key.

[Written in Friars-Carse Hermitage, 1788.]

I shall be in Edinburgh, for a few days, sometime about the latter end of February or beginning of March, when I will shew you my other pieces. My farming scheme too, particularly the management of one inclosure of Holming land, is to be decided by your superior judgment. I find, if my farm does well with me, I shall certainly be an Enthusiast in the business.

R. B.

TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.

ELLISLAND, *24th Jany.* 1789.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM—When I saw in my last newspaper that a Surgeon in Edinburgh was married to a certain amiable and accomplished young lady whose name begins with Ann,* a lady with whom I fancy I have the honor of being a little acquainted, I sincerely felt for a much-esteemed friend of mine. As you are the single, only instance that ever came within the sphere of my observation of human nature, of a young fellow dissipated but not debauched, a circumstance that has ever given me the highest idea of the native qualities of your heart, I am certain that a disappointment in the tender passion must, to you, be a very serious matter. To the hopeful youth, keen on the badger foot of Mammon or listed under the gaudy banners of ambition, a love-disappointment, as such, is an easy business; nay, perhaps he hugs himself on his escape; but to your scanty tribe of mankind, whose souls bear, on the richest materials, the most elegant impress of the Great Creator, LOVE enters deeply into their existence and is entwined with their very thread of life. I can myself affirm, both from bachelor and wedlock experience, that Love is the Alpha and Omega of human enjoyment. All the pleasures, all the happiness, of my humble compeers flow immediately and directly from this delicious source. It is the spark of celestial fire which lights up the wintry hut of poverty, and makes the cheerless mansion warm, comfortable and gay. It is the emanation of Divinity that preserves the sons and daughters of rustic labour from degenerating into the brutes with which they daily hold converse. Without it, life to the poor inmates of the cottage would be a damning gift.

I intended to go on with some kind of consolatory epistle, when, unawares, I flew off in this rhapsodical tangent. Instead of attempting to resume a subject for which I am so ill-qualified, I shall ask your opinion of some verses I have lately begun on a theme of which you are the best judge I ever saw. It is Love too; though not just warranted by the law of nations. A married lady of my acquaintance, whose

* See note, Vol. II., p. 357.

crim. con. amour with a certain Captain made some noise in the world, is supposed to write to him, now in the West Indies, as follows:—

> By all I loved, neglected and forgot,
> No friendly face ere lights my squalid cot:
> Shunned, hated, wrong'd, unpitied, unredrest,
> The mock'd quotation of the scorner's jest.*
>
> . . . . . .

Burns, as we have already seen, had met at Lord Monboddo's, in the winter of 1786–87, the amiable and modest Bishop Geddes of the Roman Catholic Church in Edinburgh. He had promised to insert some pieces in holograph and to fill the blanks left in the printed poems in the bishop's copy (an interleaved one) of his Edinburgh edition.† On returning the volume, he addressed one of his most interesting letters—

TO THE RIGHT REV. DR JOHN GEDDES.

ELLISLAND, *near Dumfries, 3d Feb.* 1789.

VENERABLE FATHER—As I am conscious that, wherever I am, you do me the honor to interest yourself in my welfare, it gives me pleasure to inform you that I am here at last, stationary in the serious business of life, and have now not only the retired leisure, but the hearty inclination, to attend to those great and important questions—what I am? where I am? and for what I am destined?

In that first concern, the conduct of the man, there was ever but one side on which I was habitually blameable, and there I have secured myself in the way pointed out by Nature and Nature's God. I was sensible that, to so helpless a creature as a poor poet, a wife and family were incumbrances which a species of prudence would bid him shun; but when the alternative was being at eternal warfare with myself, on account of habitual follies, to give them no worse name, which no general example, no licentious wit, no sophistical infidelity, would to me ever justify, I must have been a fool to have hesitated and a madman to have made another choice. Besides, I had, in 'my Jean,' a long and much-loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery among my hands, and who could trifle with such a deposit? . . .

In the affair of a livelihood, I think myself tolerably secure: I have good hopes of my farm, but should they fail, I have an Excise Commission which, on my simple petition, will at any time procure me bread. There is a certain stigma affixed to the character of an Excise officer, but I do not intend to borrow honor from any profession; and

* This letter was first printed (from the MS.) by Mr W. Scott Douglas, who added this note: 'In the original letter this is the bottom of page second: the other half of the sheet, which would contain the remainder of the verses, is wanting.'

† See Appendix, IV.

though the salary be comparatively small, it is great to any thing that the first twenty-five years of my life taught me to expect. . . .

Thus, with a rational aim and method in life, you may easily guess, my reverend and much-honored friend, that my characteristical trade is not forgotten. I am, if possible, more than ever an enthusiast to the Muses. I am determined to study Man and Nature, and in that view incessantly to try if the ripening and corrections of years can enable me to produce something worth preserving.

You will see in your book, which I beg your pardon for detaining so long, that I have been tuning my lyre on the banks of Nith. Some larger poetic plans that are floating in my imagination or partly put in execution, I shall impart to you when I have the pleasure of meeting with you, which, if you are then in Edinburgh, I shall have about the beginning of March.

That acquaintance, worthy Sir, with which you were pleased to honor me, you must still allow me to challenge; for with whatever unconcern I give up my transient connexion with the merely Great (those self-important beings whose intrinsic worthlessness is often concealed under the accidental advantages of their birth), I cannot lose the patronizing notice of the Learned and the Good, without the bitterest regret.

R. B.

TO MR JAMES BURNESS, MONTROSE.

ELLISLAND, *9th Feb.* 1789.

MY DEAR SIR—Why I did not write to you long ago is what, even on the rack, I could not answer. If you can in your mind form an idea of indolence, dissipation, hurry, cares, change of country, entering on untried scenes of life, all combined, you will save me the trouble of a blushing apology. It could not be want of regard for a man for whom I had a high esteem before I knew him—an esteem which has much increased since I did know him; and this caveat entered, I shall plead guilty to any other indictment with which you shall please to charge me.

After I parted from you, for many months my life was one continued scene of dissipation. Here at last I am become stationary, and have taken a farm and—a wife. The farm is beautifully situated on the Nith, a large river that runs by Dumfries and falls into the Solway Frith. I have gotten a lease of my farm as long as I pleased; but how it may turn out is just a guess, and it is yet to improve and enclose, &c.; however, I have good hopes of my bargain on the whole.

My wife is my Jean, with whose story you are partly acquainted. I found I had a much-loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery among my hands, and I durst not trifle with so sacred a deposit. Indeed, I

have not any reason to repent the step I have taken, as I have attached myself to a very good wife and have shaken myself loose of a very bad failing.

I have found my book a very profitable business, and with the profits of it I have begun life pretty decently. Should fortune not favour me in farming, as I have no great faith in her fickle ladyship, I have provided myself in another resource, which, however some folks may affect to despise it, is still a comfortable shift in the day of misfortune. In the hey-day of my fame, a gentleman, whose name at least I dare say you know, as his estate lies somewhere near Dundee, Mr Graham, of Fintry, one of the Commissioners of Excise, offered me the commission of an Excise officer. I thought it prudent to accept the offer; and accordingly I took my instructions and have my commission by me. Whether I may ever do duty or be a penny the better for it, is what I do not know; but I have the comfortable assurance that, come whatever ill-fate will, I can, on my simple petition to the Excise-board, get into employ.

We have lost poor uncle Robert this winter. He had long been very weak, and with very little alteration in him: he expired January 3rd. His son William has been with me this winter, and goes in May to bind himself to be a mason with my father-in-law, who is a pretty considerable architect in Ayrshire. His other son, the eldest, John, comes to me, I expect, in summer. They are both remarkably stout young fellows and promise to do well. His only daughter, Fanny, has been with me ever since her father's death, and I purpose keeping her in my family till she be quite woman-grown and be fit for better service. She is one of the cleverest girls, and has one of the most amiable dispositions, that I have ever seen.*

All friends in this county and Ayrshire are well. Remember me to all friends in the north. My wife joins me in compliments to your bed-fellow and family. I would write your brother-in-law, but have lost his address. For goodness sake don't take example by me, but write me soon. I am ever, My dear Cousin, yours most sincerely,

ROBT. BURNS.

A pathetic interest attaches to this allusion to the death of 'poor Uncle Robert,' who with the poet's father left his home in Kincardineshire to seek his fortune in the South. It would appear that on arriving in Ayrshire he first resided in a cothouse at Titwood, in Dreghorn parish, and, during summer, worked in lime quarries at Lochridge, near Stewarton. He is said to have been a victim to rheumatism, and that is probably the reason why, in winter, he earned a living by keeping, in his own house, a school which was attended by families

* Fanny was afterwards married to a brother of Mrs Burns.

of some of the farmers in the district. When his own family had grown up, and he found himself completely disabled by rheumatism, the old man removed into the town of Stewarton, where, in the Buck's Head Close, he lived for some time. He afterwards took another house, but never left Stewarton. He died there (not at Ellisland, as is generally stated) on 6th January 1788, and is buried in Stewarton churchyard, where also lie the remains of his wife and several of their children. The poet when passing to and from Dunlop House often called on his uncle at Stewarton, which is only four miles distant. When the old man died, he did all in his power to secure employment for his children.*

About the end of February, Burns paid his proposed visit to Edinburgh, to have a further 'racking of accounts' with Creech. He would now be entitled to receive payment in respect of sales effected during the later half of the year 1787 and the first half of 1788: from an expression dropped in one of his letters, the sum seems to have been about £50; and it appears that the Poet was satisfied with his publisher's reckoning.

It was probably on the occasion of his visit to Edinburgh that Burns was presented by his friend Cunningham with a copy of the first edition of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, with the following letter written on a flyleaf of the first† volume:

EDINR., *25th February* 1789.

DEAR BURNS—Accept this copy of the *Lives of the Poets*. In addition to your value as my Friend, it is a small tribute of the sincerity with which I admire you as one of *their number*. Let me indulge every wish

* Mr J. Stevenson Begg, of Irvine, to whom I am greatly indebted for much valuable information relating to Burns's relatives in Ayrshire, informs me that Janet Currie, an old woman about eighty years of age, still living in Stewarton, tells how her mother and a number of other girls were one day sitting together sewing in the kitchen of Robert Burns's house in Stewarton when the poet paid his uncle a visit. She got from the poet himself a copy of his 'Holy Fair,' as did all the other girls on that occasion. It was probably read to rags, and then lost or destroyed. John Burns, the poet's cousin, who died in 1844, is well remembered by elderly people in Stewarton. Some of them had it from his own lips that he had been, when a boy, employed at Ellisland under the poet, of whom he spoke as a good master, but absent-minded and restless—very ready to go from one thing to another in the most unexpected fashion. John Burns also spoke often of a copy of the first edition of his cousin's poems bearing the inscription, 'From the author to his cousin, John Burns.' It was borrowed by an old employer, a grazier and butcher, and does not appear to have been returned. John Burns was all his lifetime an agricultural labourer, and latterly was frequently employed to watch Stewarton graveyard against incursions of resurrectionists.—W. W.

† This volume is now (1896) in the possession of Mr James Robb, Haddington.

of my heart for your prosperity and happiness which (by the way) has not always been the concomitant, or realized in the lives of those who have written for the instruction and entertainment of Mankind. May your days be bright and unclouded—and the stream of your Life run clear and unruffled to the last drop—is the unfeigned wish of

ALEX. CUNNINGHAM.

That Burns read the book with his usual care is very clear, for when he came to Johnson's description of Hampden as the 'zealot of freedom,' he inscribed on the margin :

For shame !
Let folly and knavery freedom oppose,
'Tis suicide, Genius, to mix with her foes.

As has already been seen, Burns's youngest surviving brother, William, had been brought up as a saddler. He paid a visit to Robert about the end of 1788, and spent some weeks with him. He had then proceeded to Longtown in Cumberland, about ten miles from Carlisle, in search of employment at his trade, which he had readily obtained. Though his education was greatly inferior to that of Robert and Gilbert, and his highest ambition was to be a good journeyman saddler, the following letter shows him to have had some natural aptitude for composition :

FROM WILLIAM BURNS.

LONGTOWN, *Feb.* 15, 1789.

DEAR SIR—As I am now in a manner only entering into the world, I begin this our correspondence with a view of being a gainer by your advice, more than ever you can be by any thing I can write you of what I see, or what I hear, in the course of my wanderings. I know not how it happened, but you were more shy of your counsel than I could have wished, the time I staid with you : whether it was because you thought it would disgust me to have my faults freely told me while I was dependent on you, or whether it was because you saw that, by my indolent disposition, your instructions would have no effect, I cannot determine ; but if it proceeded from any of the above causes, the reason of withholding your admonition is now done away, for I now stand on my own bottom, and that indolence, which I am very conscious of, is something rubbed off by being called to act in life, whether I will or not ; and my inexperience, which I daily feel, makes me wish for that advice which you are so able to give and which I can only expect from you or Gilbert, since the loss of the kindest and ablest of fathers.

The morning after I went from the Isle, I left Dumfries about five

o'clock and came to Annan to breakfast, and staid about an hour; and I reached this place about two o'clock. I have got work here, and I intend to stay a month or six weeks, and then go forward, as I wish to be at York about the latter end of summer, where I propose to spend next winter, and go on for London in the spring.

I have the promise of seven shillings a week from Mr Proctor while I stay here, and sixpence more if he succeeds himself, for he has only new begun trade here. I am to pay four shillings per week of board wages, so that my neat [net] income here will be much the same as in Dumfries.

The enclosed you will send to Gilbert with the first opportunity. Please send me, the first Wednesday after you receive this, by the Carlisle waggon, two of my coarse shirts, one of my best linen ones, my velveteen vest and a neck-cloth; write to me along with them, and direct to me, Saddler, in Longtown, and they will not miscarry, for I am boarded in the waggoner's house. You may either let them be given in to the waggon, or send them to Coulthard and Gellebourn's shop and they will forward them. Please write me often while I stay here. I wish you would send me a letter, though never so small, every week, for they will be no expense to me and but little trouble to you. Please to give my best wishes to my sister-in-law, and believe me to be your affectionate and obliged Brother, WILLIAM BURNS.

P.S.—The great coat you gave me at parting did me singular service the day I came here, and merits my hearty thanks. From what has been said, the conclusion is this: that my hearty thanks and my best wishes are all that you and my sister must expect from W. B.

TO MR WILLIAM BURNS, LONGTOWN.

ISLE, *2d March* 1789.

MY DEAR WILLIAM—I arrived from Edinburgh only the night before last, so could not answer your epistle sooner. I congratulate you on the prospect of employ; and I am indebted to you for one of the best letters that has been written by any mechanic-lad in Nithsdale or Annandale or any dale on either side of the border, this twelvemonth. Not that I would have you always affect the stately stilts of studied composition, but surely writing a handsome letter is an accomplishment worth courting; and, with attention and practice, I can promise you that it will soon be an accomplishment of yours. If my advice can serve you—that is to say, if you can resolve to accustom yourself not only in reviewing your own deportment, manners, &c., but also in carrying your consequent resolutions of amending the faulty parts into practice—my small knowledge and experience of the world is heartily at your service. I intended to have given you a sheetful of counsels, but some business has prevented me. In a word, learn *taciturnity;* let that be

your motto. Though you had the wisdom of Newton or the wit of Swift, garrulousness would lower you in the eyes of your fellow-creatures. I 'll probably write you next week. I am your brother,

ROBERT BURNS.

It was probably in the following week that, according to promise, the poet wrote a second letter to his brother, in which he enforced the injunction of silence on the subject of one's private affairs—a theme on which he had recently descanted to Robert Ainslie, as well as in one of his poems—

Aye keep something to yoursel,
Ye scarcely tell to ony—

and which he undoubtedly illustrated by many curious instances of reticence in his own conduct.

TO MR WILLIAM BURNS.

ISLE, *Tuesday even* [*March* 10, 1789?]

DEAR WILLIAM—In my last, I recommended that invaluable apothegm—learn taciturnity.

It is absolutely certain that nobody can know our thoughts; and yet, from a slight observation of mankind, one would not think so. What mischiefs daily arise from silly garrulity or foolish confidence! There is an excellent Scots saying that 'A man's mind is his kingdom.'* It is certainly so; but how few can govern that kingdom with propriety.

The serious mischiefs in business which this flux of language occasions do not come immediately to your situation; but in another point of view, the dignity of the man, now is the time that will either make or mar you. Yours is the time of life for laying in habits; you cannot avoid it, though you would choose; and these habits will stick to your last sand. At after periods, even at so little advance as my years, 'tis true, one may still be very sharp-sighted to one's habitual failings and weaknesses; but to eradicate, or even amend, them, is quite a different matter. Acquired at first by accident, they by and by begin to be as it were convenient, and in time are in a manner a necessary part of our existence. I have not time for more. Whatever you read, whatever you hear, concerning the ways and works of that strange creature, Man, look into the living world about you—look into yourself for the evidence of the fact or the application of the doctrine. I am ever yours,

ROBERT BURNS.

Burns's marriage of course ruined whatever hopes Clarinda may have cherished. In a letter, which has not been preserved,

* 'My mind to me a kingdom is' occurs in Dyer, and also in Byrd's *Psalmes, Sonnets and Songs.*

she appears to have expressed her opinion of his conduct in the plainest terms, and the Poet sought to justify himself, not without a certain measure of success:

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.

March 9th, 1789.

MADAM—The letter you wrote me to Heron's carried its own answer in its bosom: you forbade me to write you, unless I was willing to plead guilty to a certain indictment that you were pleased to bring against me. As I am convinced of my own innocence, and, though conscious of high imprudence and egregious folly, can lay my hand on my breast and attest the rectitude of my heart, you will pardon me, Madam, if I do not carry my complaisance so far as humbly to acquiesce in the name of 'Villain,' merely out of compliment to your opinion, much as I esteem your judgment and warmly as I regard your worth.

I have already told you, and I again aver it, that, at the period of time alluded to, I was not under the smallest moral tie to Mrs Burns; nor did I, nor could I, then know all the powerful circumstances that omnipotent necessity was busy laying in wait for me. When you call over the scenes that have passed between us, you will survey the conduct of an honest man struggling successfully with temptations the most powerful that ever beset humanity, and preserving untainted honour in situations where the austerest virtue would have forgiven a fall; situations that, I will dare to say, not a single individual of all his kind, even with half his sensibility and passion, could have encountered without ruin; and I leave you to guess, Madam, how such a man is likely to digest an accusation of perfidious treachery.

Was I to blame, Madam, in being the distracted victim of charms which, I affirm it, no man ever approached with impunity? Had I seen the least glimmering of hope that these charms could ever have been mine; or even had not iron necessity——* But these are unavailing words.

I would have called on you when I was in town; indeed, I could not have resisted it, but that Mr Ainslie told me that you were determined to avoid your windows while I was in town, lest even a glance of me should occur in the street.

When I shall have regained your good opinion, perhaps I may venture to solicit your friendship; but, be that as it may, the first of her sex I ever knew shall always be the object of my warmest good wishes.

R. B.

In December of 1788 there had died at Loch-hill, in the parish of Morham, near Prestonpans, James Mylne, farmer and poet. Among his papers were found a considerable number of MSS., in-

* Compare the Poet's parting song 'Ae fond kiss and then we sever.'

cluding two tragedies and a poem of forty-one stanzas addressed to Burns. His son George seems to have communicated with the minister of the parish, Rev. Patrick Carfrae,* who, probably thinking the poems might be published, asked advice of Burns:

2d Jan. 1789.

Sir—If you have lately seen Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop, you have certainly heard of the author of the verses which accompany this letter. He was a man highly respectable for every accomplishment and virtue which adorns the character of a man or a Christian. To a great degree of literature, of taste and poetic genius, was added an invincible modesty of temper, which prevented, in a great degree, his figuring in life, and confined the perfect knowledge of his character and talents to the small circle of his chosen friends. He was untimely taken from us, a few weeks ago, by an inflammatory fever, in the prime of life—beloved by all who enjoyed his acquaintance and lamented by all who have any regard for virtue or genius. There is a woe pronounced in Scripture against the person whom all men speak well of: if ever that woe fell upon the head of mortal man, it fell upon him. He has left behind him a considerable number of compositions, chiefly poetical; sufficient, I imagine, to make a large octavo volume. In particular, two complete and regular tragedies, a farce of three acts and some smaller poems on different subjects. It falls to my share who have lived on the most intimate and uninterrupted friendship with him from my youth upwards, to transmit to you the verses he wrote on the publication of your incomparable poems. It is probable they were his last, as they were found in his scrutoire, folded up with the form of a letter, addressed to you, and, I imagine, were only prevented from being sent by himself, by that melancholy dispensation which we still bemoan. The verses themselves I will not pretend to criticise, when writing to a gentleman whom I consider as entirely qualified to judge of their merit. They are the only verses he seems to have attempted in the Scottish style; and I hesitate not to say, in general, that they will bring no dishonor on the Scottish muse;—and, allow me to add that, if it is your opinion they are not unworthy of the author and will be no discredit to you, it is the inclination of Mr Mylne's friends that they should be immediately published in some periodical work, to give the world a specimen of what may be expected from his performances in the poetic line, which, perhaps, will be afterwards published for the advantage of his family. . . .

I must beg the favour of a letter from you, acknowledging the receipt of this, and to be allowed to subscribe myself, with great regard, Sir, your most obedient Servant, P. Carfrae.

* Patrick Carfrae was minister of Morham (in which also Mrs Dunlop lived) from 1766 till 1795, when he was translated to Dunbar; received degree D.D., 1795; retired, 1820; died, 1822. In consequence of his habit of preaching from MS., he was nicknamed 'Paper Pate.'

In a letter which Burns addressed to Mrs Dunlop immediately after his return from Edinburgh, he adverts to Mr Carfrae's application:

TO MRS DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, *4th March* 1789.

Here am I, my honored friend, returned safe from the capital. To a man who has a home, however humble or remote—if that home is like mine, the scene of domestic comfort—the bustle of Edinburgh will soon be a business of sickening disgust.

Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate you!*

When I must skulk into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead, contemptible puppy or detestable scoundrel should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim—'What merits have these wretches had or what demerits have I had, in some state of pre-existence, that they are ushered into this state of being with the sceptre of rule and the key of riches in their puny fists, and I am kicked into the world, the sport of their folly or the victim of their pride?' I have read somewhere of a monarch (in Spain, I think it was) who was so out of humour with the Ptolemean system of astronomy, that he said, had he been of the Creator's council, he could have saved him a great deal of labour and absurdity. I will not defend this blasphemous speech; but often, as I have glided with humble stealth through the pomp of Princes Street, it has suggested itself to me, as an improvement on the present human figure, that a man, in proportion to his own conceit of his consequence in the world, could have pushed out the longitude of his common size, as a snail pushes out his horns or as we draw out a perspective. This trifling alteration, not to mention the prodigious saving it would be in the tear and wear of the neck and limb-sinews of many of his majesty's liege subjects, in the way of tossing the head and tiptoe strutting, would evidently turn out a vast advantage, in enabling us at once to adjust the ceremonials in making a bow, or making way, to a great man, and that, too, within a second of the precise spherical angle of reverence or an inch of the particular point of respectful distance which the important creature itself requires; as a measuring-glance at its towering altitude would determine the affair like instinct.

You are right, madam, in your idea of poor Mylne's poem which he has addressed to me. The piece has a good deal of merit, but it has one damning fault—it is, by far, too long. Besides, my success has encouraged such a shoal of ill-spawned monsters to crawl into public notice, under the title of Scottish Poets, that the very term Scots poetry borders on the burlesque. When I write to Mr Carfrae, I shall advise him rather to try one of his deceased friend's English pieces. I am prodigiously hurried with my own matters, else I would have requested a

* Shakespeare, *Henry VIII.*, Act III. sc. ii. line 365.

perusal of all Mylne's poetic performances, and would have offered his friends my assistance in either selecting or correcting what would be proper for the press. What it is that occupies me so much and perhaps a little oppresses my present spirits shall fill up a paragraph in some future letter. In the meantime, allow me to close this epistle with a few lines done by a friend of mine, which for beauty I shall put against any as many lines in our language. I give you them, that, as you have seen the original, you may guess whether one or two alterations I have ventured to make in them be any real improvement.

Like the fair plant that from our touch withdraws,
Shrink, mildly fearful, even from applause,
Be all a mother's fondest hope can dream,
And all you are, my charming Rachel, seem.
Straight as the fox-glove, ere her bells disclose,
Mild as the maiden-blushing hawthorn blows,
Fair as the fairest of each lovely kind,
Your form shall be the image of your mind;
Your manners shall so true your soul express
That all shall long to know the worth they guess;
Congenial hearts shall greet with kindred love,
And even sick'ning envy must approve.*

R. B.

TO THE REV. PATRICK CARFRAE.

[ELLISLAND, *March* 1789.]

REV. SIR—I do not recollect that I have ever felt a severer pang of shame, than on looking at the date of your obliging letter which accompanied Mr Mylne's poem. . . .

I am much to blame: the honor Mr Mylne has done me, greatly enhanced in its value by the endearing, though melancholy, circumstance of its being the last production of his muse, deserved a better return.

I have, as you hint, thought of sending a copy of the poem to some periodical publication; but, on second thoughts, I am afraid that, in the present case, it would be an improper step. My success, perhaps as much accidental as merited, has brought an inundation of nonsense under the name of Scottish poetry. Subscription-bills for Scottish poems have so dunned, and daily do dun, the public, that the very name is in danger of contempt. For these reasons, if publishing any of Mr Mylne's poems in a magazine, &c., be at all prudent, in my opinion it certainly should not be a Scottish poem. The profits of the labours of a man of genius are, I hope, as honorable as any profits whatever; and Mr Mylne's relations are most justly entitled to that honest harvest which fate has

* 'These beautiful lines, we have reason to believe, are the production of the lady to whom this letter is addressed.'—CURRIE.

denied himself to reap. But let the friends of Mr Mylne's fame (among whom I crave the honor of ranking myself) always keep in eye his respectability as a man and as a poet, and take no measure that, before the world knows anything about him, would risk his name and character being classed with the fools of the times.

I have, Sir, some experience of publishing; and the way in which I would proceed with Mr Mylne's poems is this:—I would publish, in two or three English and Scottish public papers, any one of his English poems which should, by private judges, be thought the most excellent, and mention it, at the same time, as one of the productions of a Lothian farmer of respectable character, lately deceased, whose poems his friends had it in idea to publish soon, by subscription, for the sake of his numerous family:—not in pity to that family, but in justice to what his friends think the poetic merits of the deceased; and to secure, in the most effectual manner, to those tender connexions whose right it is, the pecuniary reward of those merits. R. B.*

TO DR MOORE.

Ellisland, 23*d March* 1789.

Sir—The gentleman who will deliver this is a Mr Neilson, a worthy clergyman in my neighbourhood† and a very particular acquaintance of mine. As I have troubled him with this packet, I must turn him over to your goodness, to recompense him for it in a way in which he much needs your assistance, and where you can effectually serve him:—Mr Neilson is on his way for France, to wait on his Grace of Queensberry, on some little business of a good deal of importance to him, and he wishes for your instructions respecting the most eligible mode of travelling, &c., for him, when he has crossed the Channel. I should not have dared to take this liberty with you, but that I am told, by those who have the honor of your personal acquaintance, that to be a poor honest Scotchman is a letter of recommendation to you, and that to have it in your power to serve such a character gives you much pleasure, that I am persuaded in soliciting your goodness in this business I am gratifying your feelings with a degree of enjoyment.

* *Poems, consisting of Miscellaneous Pieces and Two Tragedies.* By the late James Mylne, at Loch-hill. (Edinburgh, 1790, 8vo.) Burns's name appears on the list of subscribers.

† Rev. Edward Neilson, minister of Kirkbean, in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, from 1789 till his death in 1824. It may be worth noting what was the 'little business of a good deal of importance to him,' which took Mr Neilson to Paris. He had been 'presented' to the parish of Kirkbean by the Duke of Queensberry, who had, however, forgotten to send 'the presentation'—the legal document enabling a Presbytery to proceed with the settlement of a minister—before he left Scotland. Mr Neilson went in pursuit, but failed to find the Duke. Ultimately a document, signed by the Duke's factor, was accepted by the Presbytery of Dumfries as a legal 'presentation.'

The enclosed ode is a compliment to the memory of the late Mrs Oswald of Auchencruive. You probably knew her personally, an honor of which I cannot boast; but I spent my early years in her neighbourhood, and among her servants and tenants I know that she was detested with the most heartfelt cordiality. However, in the particular part of her conduct which roused my poetic wrath she was much less blameable. In January last, on my road to Ayrshire, I had put up at Bailie Whigham's, in Sanquhar, the only tolerable inn in the place. The frost was keen, and the grim evening and howling wind were ushering in a night of snow and drift. My horse and I were both much fatigued with the labors of the day, and just as my friend the Bailie and I were bidding defiance to the storm, over a smoking bowl, in wheels the funeral pageantry of the late great Mrs Oswald, and poor I am forced to brave all the horrors of the tempestuous night, and jade my horse, my young favourite horse, whom I had just christened Pegasus, twelve miles farther on, through the wildest moors and hills of Ayrshire, to New Cumnock, the next inn. The powers of poesy and prose sink under me when I would describe what I felt. Suffice it to say that when a good fire at New Cumnock had so far recovered my frozen sinews, I sat down and wrote the inclosed ode.

I was at Edinburgh lately and settled finally with Mr Creech; and I must own that, at last, he has been amicable and fair with me.

R. B.

Dr Moore replied:

CLIFFORD-STREET, 10*th June* 1789.

DEAR SIR—I thank you for the different communications you have made me of your occasional productions in manuscript, all of which have merit and some of them merit of a different kind from what appears in the poems you have published. You ought carefully to preserve all your occasional productions, to correct and improve them at your leisure; and when you can select as many of these as will make a volume, publish it either at Edinburgh or London, by subscription: on such an occasion it may be in my power, as it is very much in my inclination, to be of service to you.

If I were to offer an opinion, it would be that in your future productions you should abandon the Scottish stanza and dialect and adopt the measure and language of modern English poetry.

The stanza which you use in imitation of 'Christ's Kirk on the Green,' with the tiresome repetition of 'that day,' is fatiguing to English ears and I should think not very agreeable to Scottish.

All the fine satire and humour of your 'Holy Fair' is lost on the English; yet, without more trouble to yourself, you could have conveyed the whole to them. The same is true of some of your other poems. In your 'Epistle to J. Smith,' the stanzas from that beginning with this line 'This life, sae far 's I understand' to that which ends with 'Short while it

grieves' are easy, flowing, gaily philosophical and of Horatian elegance —the language is English, with a *few* Scottish words, and some of those so harmonious as to add to the beauty; for what poet would not prefer *gloaming* to *twilight?*

I imagine that, by carefully keeping and occasionally polishing and correcting those verses which the Muse dictates, you will within a year or two have another volume as large as the first ready for the press; and this without diverting you from every proper attention to the study and practice of husbandry, in which I understand you are very learned, and which I fancy you will chuse to adhere to as a wife, while poetry amuses you from time to time as a mistress. The former, like a prudent wife, must not show ill-humour although you retain a sneaking kindness to this agreeable gipsy and pay her occasional visits, which in no manner alienates your heart from your lawful spouse, but tends, on the contrary, to promote her interest.

I desired Mr Cadell to write to Mr Creech to send you a copy of *Zeluco.* This performance has had great success here; but I shall be glad to have your opinion of it, because I value your opinion and because I know you are above saying what you do not think.

I beg you will offer my best wishes to my very good friend, Mrs Hamilton, who, I understand, is your neighbour. If she is as happy as I wish her, she is happy enough. Make my compliments also to Mrs Burns, and believe me to be, with sincere esteem, Dear Sir, Yours,

J. MOORE.

TO MR WILLIAM BURNS.

ISLE, *March 25th*, 1789.

I have stolen from my corn-sowing, this minute, to write a line to accompany your shirt and hat, for I can no more. Your sister Nannie arrived here yesternight and begs to be remembered to you. Write me every opportunity: never mind postage. My head, too, is as addle as an egg this morning, with dining abroad yesterday. I received yours by the Mason. Forgive me this foolish-looking scrap of an epistle. I am ever, my dear William, yours, ROBT. BURNS.

P.S.—If you are not then gone from Longtown, I 'll write you a long letter by this day se'ennight. If you should not succeed in your tramps, don't be dejected or take any rash step. Return to us in that case and we will court Fortune's better humour. Remember this, I charge you. R. B.*

It is a most notable fact in Burns's life that, long before there was any national movement for the intellectual improvement of the humbler classes, he exerted himself to the utmost in that

* Collated with the MS.—in the Watson collection, National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.

cause, as far as his own locality was concerned. Already under his and Captain Riddel's care a parish library was about to be established in their neighbourhood. Burns took upon himself the task of selecting and purchasing books. For this purpose, he renewed correspondence with Peter Hill.

TO MR PETER HILL.

ELLISLAND, 2*d April* 1789.

I will make no excuses, my dear Bibliopolus (God forgive me for murdering language!), that I have sat down to write you on this vile paper, stained with the sanguinary scores of 'thae curst horse-leeches o' th' Excise.' It is economy, Sir; it is that cardinal virtue, Prudence: so I beg you will sit down and either compose or borrow a panegyric: (if you are going to borrow, apply to our friend Ramsay * for the assistance of the author of the pretty little buttering paragraphs of eulogiums on your thrice-honored and never-enough-to-be-praised MAGISTRACY—how they hunt down a housebreaker with the sanguinary perseverance of a bloodhound—how they out-do a terrier in a badger-hole, in unearthing a Resetter of stolen goods—how they steal on a thoughtless troop of Night-nymphs as a spaniel winds the unsuspecting Covey—or how they riot o'er a ravaged B—dy-house, as a cat does o'er a plundered Mouse-nest—how they new-vamp old Churches, aiming at appearances of Piety—plan Squares and Colleges, to pass for men of taste and learning, &c., &c., &c.; while old Edinburgh, like the doating Mother of a parcel of rakehelly Prodigals, may sing, 'Hooly and Fairly,' or cry 'Wae's me that e'er I saw ye!' but still must put her hand in her pocket and pay whatever scores the young dogs think proper to contract.) I was going to say—but this d—mn'd parenthesis has put me out of breath—that you should get that manufacturer of the tinselled crockery of magisterial reputations, who makes so distinguished and distinguishing a figure in the *Evening Courant*, to compose, or rather to compound, something very clever on my remarkable frugality; that I write to one of my most esteemed friends on this wretched paper, which was originally intended for the venal fist of some drunken Exciseman, to take dirty notes in a miserable vault of an ale-cellar.

O Frugality! thou mother of ten thousand blessings—Thou Cook of fat beef and dainty greens! Thou Manufacturer of warm Shetland hose and comfortable surtouts! Thou old Housewife, darning thy decayed stockings, with thy ancient spectacles on thy aged nose!!!—Lead me, hand me in thy clutching palsied fist, up those heights, and through those thickets, hitherto inaccessible and impervious to my anxious, weary feet—not those damn'd Parnassian crags, bleak and barren, where the

* David Ramsay was proprietor of the *Edinburgh Courant*. Under his management that newspaper is said to have attained a circulation larger than any of its contemporaries in Scotland.

hungry worshippers of Fame are breathless, clambering, hanging between heaven and hell, but these glittering cliffs of Potosi, where the all-sufficient, all-powerful deity, Wealth, holds his immediate court of joys and pleasures; where the sunny exposure of Plenty, and the hot walls of profusion, produce those blissful fruits of Luxury, exotics in this world, and natives of Paradise!!! Thou withered Sibyl, my sage Conductress, usher me into the refulgent, adored Presence! The Power, splendid and potent as he now is, was once the puling nursling of thy faithful care and tender arms! Call me thy son, thy cousin, thy kinsman or favorite, and adjure the god by the scenes of his infant years no longer to repulse me as a stranger or an alien, but to favor me with his peculiar countenance and protection! He daily bestows his greatest kindnesses on the undeserving and the worthless—assure him that I bring ample documents of meritorious demerits! Pledge yourself for me, that, for the glorious cause of LUCRE, I will do any thing, be any thing—but the horse-leech of private Oppression or the vulture of public Robbery!!!!

But, to descend from heroics—what, in the name of all the devils at once, have you done with my trunk? Please let me have it by the first carrier, except his name be Niven; he is a rascal who imposed, or would have imposed, on me the other day most infamously.

I want a 'Shakespear'—let me know what plays your used copy of Bell's 'Shakespear' wants. I want likewise an English dictionary—Johnson's, I suppose, is best. [In] these and all my *Prose* commissions, the cheapest is always the best for me. There is a small debt of honor that I owe Mr Robert Cleghorn, in Saughton Mills, my worthy friend and your well-wisher: please give him, and urge him to take it, the first time you see him, ten shillings' worth of any thing you have to sell, and place it to my account.

The library scheme that I mentioned to you is already begun, under the direction of Captain Riddel and ME! There is another, in emulation of it, going on at Closeburn, under the auspices of Mr Menteath of Closeburn,* which will be on a greater scale than ours. I have likewise secured it for you. Captain Riddel gave his infant society a great many of his old books, else I had written you on that subject; but, one of these days, I shall trouble you with a Commission for 'The Monkland Friendly Society.' A copy of *The Spectator*, *Mirror*, *Lounger*, *Man of Feeling*, *Man of the World*, Guthrie's *Geographical Grammar*, with some religious pieces, will likely be our first order.

Write me first post and send me the address of Stuart, Publisher of *The Star* newspaper: this I beg particularly, but do not speak of it. I'll expect along with the trunk, my Ainslie's map of Scotland;† and if

* Rev. Sir James Stuart-Menteath, Rector of Barrowby, Lincolnshire, who had purchased Closeburn estate from Sir Thomas Kirkpatrick in 1783. William Stewart was his factor.

† *Scotland drawn and engrav'd from a Series of Angles and Astronomical Observations;* by John Ainslie, Land Surveyor, was published on January 1st, 1789, by John and James Ainslie, Edinburgh. The map measures 6 feet by 5 feet 3 inches.

you could send your boy to Mr Bengo, Engraver: he has a picture of mine a-framing, which will be ready by this time. You see the freedom I take with you. Please direct any parcels to me to the care of Walter Auld, Saddler, Dumfries. When I grow richer, I will write to you on gilt-post, to make amends for this sheet. At present, every guinea has a five-guinea errand with, My dear Sir, your faithful, poor but honest, friend, R. B.

(By Stuart, I mean the famous Stuart who differed with the rest of the proprietors and set up by himself.)

We now come to a circumstance in Burns's life regarding which little information is available. The difficulty of writing the story of his connection with the periodical publications of his day is due partly to his extreme reticence, and partly to the fact that last century little attempt was made to preserve, for future reference, the newspapers of the time. Although Burns had been an occasional contributor to more than one periodical, it was not until early in 1789 that an offer was made to him to become a regular contributor to the press.

Early in the seventies, Charles and Peter Stuart—who came of a family which claimed kindred with the royal house of Stuart—left their home in Edinburgh to settle as printers in London. In 1778 they were joined by a younger brother, Daniel. Charles, the eldest, who had been the school-fellow and intimate friend of Robert Fergusson, had an inclination for the stage, and became a playwright. Peter and Daniel stuck to printing, and were sufficiently successful to be able to start in business for themselves. In 1788 the printing of the *Morning Post* was transferred to them. From printers the brothers became editors and proprietors.*

In the same year—three years only after the appearance of the more famous *Times*—Peter resigned his place on the *Morning Post* to undertake the issuing of the first (daily) evening paper, *The Star*. He had seen in the facilities offered by Palmer's mail-

* In 1795–6 the Stuarts purchased *The Oracle* and the *Morning Post*. Daniel—then only twenty-nine years of age—took charge of the *Post*, and before many months had passed he had gathered round him a brilliant staff of writers, including Coleridge, Lamb, Southey, and Wordsworth, and raised his paper to a leading place among the newspapers of the day. He, Perry, and Walter were the three great editors of the end of the eighteenth century. Peter superintended *The Oracle*, also with success. In 1805 he inserted in his paper an article expressing sympathy with Lord Melville. He was summoned before the House of Commons—charged with libel, and taken into custody; on apologising he was 'reprimanded and admonished.'

coach a ready means of circulation. He chose as editor Andrew Macdonald, a brother Scot and a well-known dramatic writer, and gathered round him a staff of young men who soon 'made' the paper. It continued for many years the leading evening paper on the Whig side. Under the title of *The Star and Evening Advertiser*, the first number was issued on Saturday, May 3, 1788, and (although the name was slightly altered more than once) it was published regularly until 1831, when it was incorporated with *The Albion*. It seems to have been while looking round for assistance that the proprietor turned to Burns and offered him 'for communications to the paper, a small salary quite as large as his Excise office emoluments.' Burns did not see his way to accept such an offer, but promised to be an occasional contributor, and Stuart in return sent him his paper. The Poet's thanks were expressed in a letter which the proprietor inserted in the issue of the 7th May following.

TO MR PETER STUART.

[*End of April* 1789.]

Mr PRINTER—Your goodness oppresses me—'Talbot's death was woe enough though it had ended there.'

Your polite exculpation of me in your paper was enough. The paper itself is more than I can in decency accept of, as I can do little or nothing on my part to requite the obligation. For this reason, I am to be at liberty to resign your favour at pleasure, without any imputation of little pride or pettish humour.

I have had my usual luck in receiving your paper. They have all come to hand except the two which I most wanted, the 17th and 18th, in which I understand my verses are. So it has been with me always. A damned Star has almost all my life usurped my zenith and squinted out the cursed rays of its malign influences. In the strong language of the old Hebrew Seer—'And behold, whatsoever he purposeth, it shall not come to pass; and whatsoever he doth, it shall not prosper.'

Any alterations you think necessary in my trifles, make them and welcome. In political principles, I promise you I shall be seldom out of the way; as I could lay down my life for that amiable, gallant, generous fellow, our heir-apparent. Allow me to correct the addresses you give me:—I am not R. B., Esq. No Poet, by statute of Parnassus, has a right, as an author, to assume Esquire, except he has had the honour to dedicate, 'by permission,' to a Prince, if not to a King; so I am as yet simply, Mr ROBERT BURNS, at your service. The preceding are yours, 'as you like it.' The Ode is a compliment I paid to that venerable

votary of iron avarice and sordid pride—the late Mrs Oswald of Auchencruive, N——, Ayrshire. The Epitaph ['Epitaph on a Miser,' initialled 'G. T.']* is not mine. I must beg of you never to put my name to anything I send, except where I myself set it down at the head or foot of the piece. I am charmed with your paper. I wish it was more in my power to contribute to it; but over and above a comfortable stock of laziness, of which, or rather, *by* which, I am possessed, the regions of my fancy are dreadfully subject to baleful east-winds, which, at times, for months together, wither every bud and blossom, and turn the whole into an arid waste. From which evil, good Lord deliver us! Amen!

R. B.

In the same column with that letter appeared another as preface to the 'Ode'—probably the most elaborately severe of all Burns's writings.

Mr Printer—I know not who is the author of the following poem, but I think it contains some equally well-told and just compliments to the memory of a Matron who, a few months ago, much against her private inclinations, left this good world and twice five good thousands *per annum* behind her.

We are told, by very respectable authority, that 'the *righteous* die, and none regardeth;' but as this was by no means the case in point with the departed beldam, for whose memory I have the honour to interest myself, it is not easy guessing why prose and verse have both said so little on the death of the owner of ten thousand a year.

I dislike partial respect of persons and am hurt to see the public make such a fuss when a poor pennyless gipsey is consigned over to Jack Ketch and yet scarce take any notice when a purse-proud Priestess of Mammon is, by the inexorable hand of death, pinioned in everlasting fetters of ill-gotten gold, and delivered up to that arch-brother among the finishers of the law, emphatically called, by our Bard, the Hangman of Creation.

Tim Nettle.

ODE

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF MRS OSWALD OF AUCHENCRUIVE.†

Dweller in yon dungeon dark,
Hangman of creation, mark!
Who in widow-weeds appears,
Laden with unhonoured years,
Noosing with care a bursting purse,
Baited with many a deadly curse?

* Probably Gavin Turnbull; see Vol. IV.

† 'Dec. 6, 1788, died at her house in Great George Street, Westminster, Mrs Oswald, widow of Richard Oswald, Esq., of Auchencruive.'—*Magazine Obituary.* Richard Oswald, youngest son of the Rev. George Oswald of Dunnet, settled in London and acquired great

STROPHE.

View the wither'd beldam's face—
Can thy keen inspection trace
Aught of Humanity's sweet, melting grace?
Note that eye, 'tis rheum o'erflows—
Pity's flood there never rose.
See those hands, ne'er stretch'd to save,
Hands that took—but never gave.
Keeper of Mammon's iron chest,
Lo, there she goes, unpitied and unblest
She goes, but not to realms of everlasting rest!

ANTISTROPHE.

Plunderer of Armies! lift thine eyes
(A while forbear, ye tort'ring fiends),
Seest thou whose step, unwilling, hither bends?
No fallen angel, hurl'd from upper skies!
'Tis thy trusty, *quondam Mate*,
Doom'd to share thy fiery fate—
She, tardy, hell-ward plies.

EPODE.

And are they of no more avail,
Ten thousand glitt'ring pounds a-year?
In other worlds can Mammon fail,
Omnipotent as he is here?
O, bitter mock'ry of the *pompous bier*,
While down the wretched *vital part* is driv'n!
The cave-lodg'd beggar, with a conscience clear,
Expires in rags, unknown, and goes to Heav'n.

The ode illustrates Burns's habit of judging persons and things by any casual effect they might exercise in his feelings at a time when he was inclined to composition.

wealth as a merchant and, afterwards, as a Government contractor during the Seven Years' War. He purchased Auchencruive (parish of St Quivox, Ayrshire), the ancient seat of the Cathcarts, about 1759, and lived there until his death in 1784. He had married Mary Ramsay (only daughter and heiress of Alexander Ramsay of Jamaica), through whom he had acquired large estates in America and the West Indies. On his death she removed to London, and died there. It was while her body was being taken to St Quivox, to be laid beside that of her husband, that the cortege stopped overnight at Sanquhar. Auchencruive is still in possession of the Oswald family.

Allan Cunningham has preserved a pleasanter memorial of one of Burns's Ayrshire journeys: 'He had arrived at Wanlockhead on a winter day, when the roads were slippery with ice, and Jenny Geddes or Peg Nicolson [more likely, Pegasus] kept her [his] feet with difficulty. The blacksmith of the place was busied with other pressing matters in the forge and could not spare time for *frosting* the shoes of the Poet's mare, and it is likely he would have proceeded on his dangerous journey had he not bethought himself of propitiating the son of Vulcan with verse. He called for pen and ink, and wrote these verses to John Taylor, a person of influence in Wanlockhead:

TO MR JOHN TAYLOR.*

With Pegasus upon a day
Apollo, weary flying,
Thro' frosty hills the journey lay,
On foot the way was plying.

Poor, slip-shod, giddy Pegasus
Was but a sorry walker,
To Vulcan then Apollo gaes
To get a frosty calker.†

Obliging Vulcan fell to wark,
Threw by his coat and bonnet;
And did Sol's business in a crack,
Sol pay'd him with a sonnet.

Ye Vulcan's Sons of Wanlockhead,
Pity my sad disaster!
My Pegasus is poorly shod,
I 'll pay you like my Master.

Ramage's, 3 o'clock. ROBT. BURNS.

It is added that, as this poetic note was somewhat enigmatical, Mr Sloan supplemented it with one in prose, in which he explained that 'the whole business was to ask the favour of getting the

* The MS. of this, with Sloan's letter attached, is now in Alloway Cottage.

† A horse is said in Scotland to be 'frosted' or 'sharpened' when it is roughshod for frosty weather, by having the edges at the front of the shoes—the calks, calkins, calkers, or caulkers—turned over so as to grip on slippery ground.

horse's shoes sharpened.' Mr Taylor, thus enlightened, spoke to the smith; the smith flew to his tools and quickly did what was required of him.

Of earlier date than these letters, however, is one the *raison d'être* of which is given by Burns himself in the Glenriddel volume of prose. Although the 'Address of the Scottish Distillers' appeared in *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*—another London newspaper—it had probably been copied from *Stuart's Star*.* 'At the juncture of the king's illness, while the Regency Bill was pending, and when every body expected the Premier's downfall, Addresses crowded in to him from all quarters; and among the rest, the following appeared in a newspaper. The Addressers, the late Distillers of Scotland, had been lately ruined by a positive breach of the Public faith, in a most partial tax laid on by the House of Commons, to favour a few opulent English Distillers who, it seems, were of vast Electioneering consequence.'

ADDRESS OF THE SCOTTISH DISTILLERS TO THE RIGHT HONBLE. WILLIAM PITT.

[*February* 1789.]

Sir—While pursy Burgesses crowd your gate, sweating under the weight of heavy Addresses, permit us, the quondam Distillers in that part of Great Britain called Scotland, to approach you, not with venal approbation, but with fraternal condolence; not as what you just now are, or for some time have been, but as what, in all probability, you will shortly be. We will have the merit of not deserting our *friends* in the day of their calamity, and you will have the satisfaction of perusing at least one honest Address. You are well acquainted with the dissection of human nature; nor do you need the assistance of a fellow-creature's bosom to inform you that Man is always a selfish, often a perfidious, being. This assertion, however the hasty conclusions of superficial observation may doubt it, or the raw inexperience of youth may deny it, those who make the fatal experiment we have done, will feel it. You are a Statesman, and consequently are not ignorant of the traffic of these Corporation Compliments. The little Great Man who drives the Borough to market, and the very Great Man who buys the Borough in that market, they two do the whole business; and you well know they, likewise, have their price. With that sullen disdain which you can so well assume, rise, illustrious Sir, and spurn these hireling efforts of venal stupidity. They are the compliments of a man's friends on the morning of his execution:

* Such was the case with the song 'Anna, thy charms my bosom fire,' which appeared in *The Gazetteer* two days after publication in *Stuart's Star*.

they take a decent farewell, resign you to your fate and hurry away from your approaching hour.

If Fame say true and omens be not very much mistaken, You are about to make your exit from that world where the sun of gladness gilds the path of prosperous men: permit us, Great Sir, with the sympathy of fellow feeling, to hail your passage to the realms of ruin. Whether the sentiment proceed from the selfishness or cowardice of mankind is immaterial; but to a child of misfortune, pointing him out those who are still more unhappy, is giving him some degree of positive enjoyment. In this light, Sir, our downfall may be *again* useful to you: though not exactly *in the same way*, it is not perhaps the first time it has gratified your feelings. It is true, the triumph of your evil star is exceedingly despiteful. At an age when others are the votaries of Pleasure or underlings in business, you had attained the highest wish of a British Statesman; and, with the ordinary date of human life, what a prospect was before you! Deeply rooted in Royal favour, you overshadowed the Land; the birds of passage which follow Ministerial sunshine through every clime of Political faith and manners flocked to your branches; and the beasts of the field, the lordly possessors of hills and vallies, crowded under your shade. 'But behold a watcher, a holy one, came down from Heaven, and cried aloud, and said thus: Hew down the tree and cut off his branches; shake off his leaves and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it and the fowls from his branches!' A blow from an unthought-of quarter, one of those terrible accidents * which peculiarly mark the hand of Omnipotence, overset your career and laid all your fancied honours in the dust. But turn your eyes, Sir, to the tragic scenes of our fate. An ancient Nation that for many ages had gallantly maintained the unequal struggle for independence with her much more powerful neighbour, at last agrees to a Union which should ever after make them one People. In consideration of certain circumstances, it was covenanted that the former should enjoy a stipulated alleviation in her share of the public burdens, particularly in that branch of the revenue called the Excise. This just privilege has of late given great umbrage to some interested, powerful individuals of the more potent half of the empire, and they have spared no wicked pains, under insidious pretexts, to subvert, what they yet dreaded, the spirit of their ancient enemies, too much openly to attack. In this conspiracy we fell: nor did we alone suffer: our Country was deeply wounded. A number of, we will say it, respectable individuals, largely engaged in trade, where we were not only useful but absolute necessary to our Country in her dearest interests; we, with all that was near and dear to us, were sacrificed without remorse to the Infernal deity of Political Expediency! Not that sound policy, the good of the whole; we fell to gratify the wishes of dark Envy, and the views of unprincipled Ambition! Your foes, Sir, were avowed: you fell

* In November 1788–February 1789, the king's insanity and the regency controversy seriously threatened Pitt's position, and he thought of returning to work at the bar. He was triumphant again in October 1790.

in the face of day: your enemies were too brave to take an ungenerous advantage. On the contrary, our enemies, to complete our overthrow, contrived to make their guilt appear the villainy of a Nation. Your downfall only drags with you your private friends and partizans; in our misery are, more or less, involved the most numerous and the most valuable part of the Community—all those who immediately depend on the cultivation of the soil, from the landlord of a province down to his lowest hind.

Allow us, Sir, yet further, just to hint at another rich vein of comfort in the dreary regions of Adversity: the gratulations of an approving conscience. In a certain Great Assembly of which you are a distinguished member, panegyrics on your private virtues have so often wounded your delicacy that we shall not distress you with any thing on the subject. There is, however, one part of your public conduct which our feelings will not permit us to pass in silence: our gratitude must trespass on your modesty: we mean, worthy Sir, your whole behaviour to the Scots Distillers. In evil hours, when obtrusive recollection presses bitterly on the sense, let that, Sir, come like a healing angel and speak the peace to your soul which the world can neither give nor take away.

We have the honor to be, Sir, your sympathising fellow-sufferers and grateful humble servants, JOHN BARLEYCORN—*Preses.*

Another contribution shows Burns's persistent interest in the political movements of his time. In consequence of the illness of the king, a Regency Bill was introduced. Fox was for giving all power to the Prince of Wales—the proposed regent; Pitt was for restrictions on that power. The Bill had passed the Commons, and been read a second time in the Lords, when it was announced that the king was recovering. The Bill was therefore withdrawn. The following ode, dated from 'Edinburgh, April 7,' and signed 'Agricola,' was preceded by this note: 'As the following fanciful verses contain the genuine energy and commanding spirit of Poetry, the Printer is happy in communicating them to the Public; and he assures his Readers, notwithstanding they appear under a fictitious signature, that they are the production of a Genius who ranks very high in the Republic of Letters.'

ODE TO THE DEPARTED REGENCY-BILL, 1789.

ELLISLAND, 17*th March* 1789.

Daughter of Chaos' doting years!
Nurse of ten thousand hopes and fears!
Whether thy airy, unsubstantial Shade
(The rights of sepulture now duly paid)

Spread abroad its hideous form
On the roaring Civil Storm,
Deafening din and warring rage
Factions wild with factions wage ;
Or under ground, deep-sunk, profound,
  Among the demons of the earth,
With groans that make the mountains shake,
  Thou mourn thy ill-starred, blighted birth ;
Or in the uncreated Void
  Where seeds of future-being fight,
With lessen'd step thou wander wide,
  To greet thy Mother—Ancient Night,*
And as each jarring, monster mass is past,
Fond recollect what once thou wast :
In manner due, beneath this sacred oak,
Hear, Spirit, hear ! thy presence I invoke !

By a Monarch's heaven-struck fate !
By a disunited State !
By a generous Prince's wrongs !
By a Senate's strife of tongues !
By a Premier's sullen pride,
Louring on the changing tide !
By dread Thurlow's powers to awe,
Rhetoric, blasphemy and law !
  By the turbulent ocean,
  A Nation's commotion !
  By the harlot-caresses
  Of borough-addresses !
  By days few and evil !
  Thy portion, poor devil !
By Power, Wealth, Show ! the gods by men adored !
By Nameless Poverty ! (Their hell abhorred !)
By all they hope ! By all they fear !
Hear !!! And Appear !!!

Stare not on me, thou ghastly Power ;
Nor grim with chained defiance lour :

* Milton's 'chaos and ancient night' again.

No Babel-structure would I build
Where, Order exil'd from his native sway,
Confusion may the REGENT-sceptre wield,
While all would rule and none obey:
Go! to the world of Man relate
The story of thy sad, eventful fate!
And call Presumptuous Hope to hear,
And bid him check his blind career,
And tell the sore-prest sons of Care,
Never, never to despair!*

Paint CHARLES'S speed on wings of fire,
The object of his fond desire,
Beyond his boldest hopes, at hand:
Paint all the triumph of the Portland Band:†
Mark how they lift the joy-exulting voice;
And how their numerous Creditors rejoice:
But just as hopes to warm enjoyment rise,
Cry CONVALESCENCE! and the vision flies.

Then next portray a darkening twilight gloom
Eclipsing, sad, a gay, rejoicing morn,
While proud Ambition to th' untimely tomb
By gnashing, grim, despairing fiends is borne:
Paint ruin, in the shape of high D[undas],
Gaping with giddy terror o'er the brow;
In vain he struggles, the Fates behind him press,
And clamorous hell yawns for her prey below:
How fallen *That*, whose pride late scaled the skies!
And *This*, like Lucifer, no more to rise!
Again pronounce the powerful word;
See Day, triumphant from the night, restored.

Then know this truth, ye Sons of Men!
(Thus end thy moral tale)
Your darkest terrors may be vain,
Your brightest hopes may fail.

* From *The Masque of Alfred*, by James Thomson and David Mallet.

† The (third) Duke of Portland was nominal head of the 'Coalition Ministry' of 1783, of which 'Charles' (Charles James Fox) was the chief member.

A month later we find another communication—this time a parody of a psalm—proving that *The Star* was what Burns had said of it—'a blasphemous party newspaper.' Thursday, 23d April, was appointed a day of public thanksgiving for the recovery of the king. Burns looked on the 'whole business as a solemn farce of pageant mummery,' and composed some 'Stanzas of Psalmody.'

KILMARNOCK, *April* 30.

MR PRINTER—In a certain *Chapel* not fifty leagues from the market-cross of this good town, the following stanzas of Psalmody, it is said, were composed for, and devoutly sung on, the late joyful solemnity, on the 23rd inst.

O, sing a new song to the Lord!
Make, all and every one,
A joyful noise, ev'n for the king
His Restoration.

The sons of Belial in the land
Did set their heads together;
Come, let us sweep them off, said they
Like an o'erflowing river.

They set their heads together, I say,
They set their heads together:
On right, and left, and every hand,
We saw none to deliver.

Thou madest strong two chosen Ones,
To quell the Wicked's pride:
That Young Man,* great in Issachar
The burden-bearing Tribe.

And him, among the Princes chief
In our Jerusalem,
The Judge that 's mighty in Thy law,†
The Man that fears Thy name.

* William Pitt.

† Edward Thurlow, then Lord Chancellor. Pitt and 'fighting Thurlow' had opposed (for personal and party reasons) the appointment of a regent armed with all the powers of a king.

Yet they, even they, with all their might,
Began to faint and fail;
Even as two howling, ravening wolves
To dogs do turn their tail.

Th' Ungodly o'er the Just prevail'd,
For so Thou hadst appointed,
That Thou might'st greater glory give
Unto Thine own Anointed.

And now Thou hast restor'd our State,
Pity our kirk also,
For she by tribulations
Is now brought very low!

Consume that High-Place, PATRONAGE,
From off thine holy hill;
And in Thy fury burn the book
Even of that man M'Gill.*

Now hear our Prayer, accept our Song,
And fight Thy Chosen's battle:
We seek but little, Lord, from Thee,
Thou kens we get as little.

DUNCAN M'LEERIE.

There is usually printed in Burns's works an ode, entitled 'Delia,' which, from its lack of force and true feeling, many critics have suspected not to be his composition. Allan Cunningham tells a feasible-enough-looking story regarding it: 'One day when the poet was at Brownhill, in Nithsdale, a friend read some verses composed after the pattern of Pope's song by a person of quality, and said: "Burns, this is beyond you; the muse of Kyle cannot match the muse of London City." The poet took the paper, hummed the verses over, and then recited "Delia, an Ode."' This also seems to have been communicated to Stuart.

* *Essay on the death of Jesus Christ*, by William M'Gill. (See below, p. 91).

Mr Printer—If the productions of a simple ploughman can merit a place in the same paper with Sylvester Otway and the other favourites of the Muses who illuminate the *Star* with the lustre of genius, your insertion of the enclosed trifle will be succeeded by future communications from—Yours, &c., R. Burns.

Ellisland, *near Dumfries*,
18*th May* 1789.

DELIA, AN ODE.

Fair the face of orient day,
Fair the tints of op'ning rose;
But fairer still my Delia dawns,
More lovely far her beauty shows.

Sweet the lark's wild warbled lay,
Sweet the tinkling rill to hear;
But, Delia, more delightful still
Steal thine accents on mine ear.

The flower-enamour'd, busy bee
The rosy banquet loves to sip;
Sweet the streamlet's limpid laps
To the sun-brown'd Arab's lip.

But, Delia, on thy balmy lips
Let me, no vagrant insect, rove;
O let me steal one liquid kiss,
For, oh! my soul is parched with love!

TO MR WILLIAM BURNS.

Isle, 15*th April* 1789.

My dear William—I am extremely sorry at the misfortune of your legs; I beg you will never let any worldly concern interfere with the more serious matter, the safety of your life and limbs. I have not time in these hurried days to write you anything other than a mere *how d' ye* letter. I will only repeat my favourite quotation :—

What proves the hero truly great
Is never, never to despair.*

* *The Masque of Alfred* is once more drawn upon by the poet.

My house shall be your welcome home; and as I know your prudence (would to God you had *resolution* equal to your *prudence!*); if, anywhere at a distance from friends, you should need money, you know my direction by post.

The inclosed is from Gilbert, brought by your sister Nanny. It was unluckily forgot. Yours to Gilbert goes by post. I heard from them yesterday, they are all well. Adieu. R. B.

TO MR JAMES JOHNSON.

ELLISLAND, *24th April* 1789.

DEAR SIR—My trunk was unaccountably delayed in Edinburgh, and did not reach me till about ten days ago; so I had not much time of your music. I have sent you a list that I approve of, but I beg and insist that you will never allow my opinion to overrule yours. I will write you more at large next post, as I, at present, have scarce time to subscribe myself, dear Sir, yours sincerely, ROBT. BURNS.

Burns had paid a visit this spring to Mr M'Murdo,* at Drumlanrig Castle, and had been charmed by the kindness of his reception. Having occasion soon after to send to Mrs M'Murdo a poem which he had recited to her family in an imperfect state, he accompanied it with a letter of thanks.

TO MRS M'MURDO, DRUMLANRIG.

ELLISLAND, *2nd May* 1789.

MADAM—I have finished the piece which had the happy fortune to be honored with your approbation; and never did little Miss, with more sparkling pleasure, show her applauded sampler to partial Mamma, than I now send my Poem to you and Mr M'Murdo, if he is returned to Drumlanrig. You cannot easily imagine what thin-skinned animals—what sensitive plants, poor Poets are. How do we shrink into the embittered corner of self-abasement when neglected or condemned by those to whom we look up! and how do we, in erect importance, add another cubit to our stature on being noticed and applauded by those whom we honor and respect! My late visit to Drumlanrig has, I can tell you, Madam, given me a balloon waft up Parnassus, where on my fancied elevation I regard my poetic self with no small degree of complacency.

Surely with all their sins, the rhyming tribe are not ungrateful creatures. I recollect your goodness to your humble guest—I see Mr M'Murdo adding to the politeness of the Gentleman the kindness of a Friend, and my heart swells as it would burst, with warm emotions and ardent wishes! It may be it is not gratitude, at least it may be a mixed

* John M'Murdo (1743-1803) was descended from a family which was long connected with Dumscore. His father also had been chamberlain at Drumlanrig. Mrs M'Murdo was a daughter of Provost Blair of Dumfries.

sensation. That strange, shifting, doubling animal MAN is so generally at best, but a negative, often a worthless, creature, that we cannot see real Goodness and native Worth without feeling the bosom glow with sympathetic approbation. With every sentiment of grateful respect, I have the honor to be, Madam, your obliged and grateful humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, *4th May* 1789.*

You see, Madam, that I am returned to my folio epistles again. I no sooner hit on any poetic plan or fancy but I wish to send it to you; and if knowing and reading them gives half the pleasure to you, that communicating them to you gives to me, I am satisfied.

As I am not devoutly attached to a certain monarch, I cannot say that my heart ran any risk of bursting, on Thursday was se'ennight,† with the struggling emotions of gratitude. God forgive me for speaking evil of dignities! but I must say that I look on the whole business as a solemn farce of fragrant mummery. The following are a few stanzas of new Psalmody for that 'joyful solemnity,' which I sent to a London newspaper with the date and preface following.

[Stanzas beginning 'O sing a new song to the Lord.']

So much for Psalmody. You must know that the publisher of one of the most blasphemous party London newspapers is an acquaintance of mine, and as I am a little tinctured with Buff and Blue myself, I now and then help him to a stanza.

I have another poetic whim in my head, which I at present dedicate, or rather inscribe, to the Rt. Honble. Ch. J. Fox, Esquire; but how long that fancy may hold, I can't say. A few of the first lines I have just rough-sketched as follows :—

SKETCH.

INSCRIBED TO CHARLES JAMES FOX, ESQ.

How Wisdom and Folly meet, mix and unite;
How Virtue and Vice blend their black and their white;
How Genius, th' illustrious father of fiction,
Confounds rule and law, reconciles contradiction—
I sing: If these mortals, the critics, should bustle,
I care not, not I—let the critics go whistle!

But now for a patron, whose name and whose glory
At once may illustrate and honor my story.

* Dr Currie gave the date of this letter as 4th April 1789—an impossible one.

† The public thanksgiving in St Paul's for the king's recovery from mental derangement took place on 23d April.

Thou first of our orators, first of our wits,
Yet whose parts and acquirements seem mere lucky hits,
With knowledge so vast and with judgment so strong,
No man with the half of 'em e'er went far wrong;
With passions so potent and fancies so bright,
No man with the half of 'em e'er went quite right;
A sorry, poor, misbegot son of the muses,
For using thy name offers fifty excuses.

Good L—d, what is man! for as simple he looks,
Do but try to develop his hooks and his crooks;
With his depths and his shallows, his good and his evil,
All in all he 's a problem must puzzle the devil.

On his one ruling passion Sir Pope* hugely labours,
That, like th' old Hebrew walking-switch, eats up its neighbours:
Mankind are his show-box—a friend, would you know him?
Pull the string, ruling passion the picture will shew him.
What pity, in rearing so beauteous a system,
One trifling particular, *truth*, should have miss'd him;
For, spite of his fine theoretic positions,
Mankind is a science defies definitions.

Some sort all our qualities, each to its tribe,
And think human nature they truly describe;
Have you found this or t' other? there 's more in the wind,
As by one drunken fellow his comrades you 'll find.
But such is the flaw, or the depth of the plan,
In the make of that wonderful creature call'd Man;
No two virtues, whatever relation they claim,
Nor even two different shades of the same,
Though like as was ever twin brother to brother,
Possessing the one shall imply you 've the other.†

But truce with abstraction, and truce with a Muse
Whose rhymes you 'll perhaps, Sir, ne'er deign to peruse:

* Pope's *Essay on Man.*

† The verses following this line were first printed, from the manuscript, in the second Aldine edition (1839).

Will you leave your justings, your jars and your quarrels,
Contending with Billy* for proud-nodding laurels?
My much-honor'd Patron, believe your poor poet,
Your courage, much more than your prudence, you show it:
In vain with Squire Billy for laurels you struggle;
He 'll have them by fair trade, if not, he will smuggle:
Not cabinets even of kings would conceal 'em,
He 'd up the back-stairs, and, by G—, he would steal 'em!
Then feats like Squire Billy's you ne'er can achieve 'em;
It is not, out-do him—the task is, out-thieve him!

I beg your pardon for troubling you with the enclosed to the Major's tenant before the gate: it is to request him to look me out two milk cows; one for myself and another for Captain Riddel of Glenriddel, a very obliging neighbour of mine. John very obligingly offered to do so for me; and I will either serve myself that way or at Mauchline fair. It happens on the 20th curt., and the Sunday preceding it I hope to have the honor of assuring you in person how sincerely I am, Madam, your highly obliged and most obedient humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

TO MR ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM.†

ELLISLAND, *4th May* 1789.

MY DEAR SIR—Your *duty-free* Favor of the 26th April I received two days ago. I will not say I perused it with pleasure; that is the cold compliment of ceremony; I perused it, Sir, with delicious satisfaction. In short, it is such a letter that not you nor your friend, but the Legislature, by express Proviso in their Postage laws, should frank. A letter informed with all the glowing soul of friendship is such an honor to Human nature that they should order it free ingress and egress to and from their bags and mails, as an encouragement and mark of distinction to super-eminent Virtue.

I have just put the last hand to a little Poem which I think will be something to your taste. One morning lately, as I was out pretty early in the fields sowing some grass-seeds, I heard the burst of a shot from a neighbouring Plantation, and presently a poor little wounded hare came crippling by me. You will guess my indignation at the inhuman fellow who could shoot a hare at this season, when they all of them have young ones; and it gave me no little gloomy satisfaction to see the poor injured creature escape him. Indeed, there is something in all that multiform business of destroying, for our sport, individuals in the animal creation that do not injure us materially, that I could never reconcile to my ideas of native Virtue and eternal Right.

* William Pitt.

† Here first given completely from the MS.—now in the Observatory at Dumfries.

ON SEEING A FELLOW WOUND A HARE WITH A SHOT, APRIL 1789.

Inhuman man! curse on thy barb'rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye!
May never Pity soothe thee with a sigh,
Nor ever Pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go live, poor wand'rer of the wood and field,
The bitter little that of life remains:
No more the thickening brakes or verdant plains
To thee or home or food or pastime yield.

Seek, mangled innocent, some wonted form; the hare's resting-place
That wonted form, alas! thy dying bed,
The shelt'ring rushes whistling o'er thy head,
The cold earth with thy blood-stain'd bosom warm.

Perhaps a mother's anguish adds its woe;
The playful pair crowd fondly by thy side:
Ah, helpless nurslings, who will now provide
That life a mother only can bestow?

Oft as by winding Nith I, musing, wait
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
And curse the ruthless wretch and mourn thy hapless fate.

[For an important addition to this letter, see Appendix I.]

Let me know how you like my Poem. I am doubtful whether it would not be an improvement to keep out the last stanza but one, altogether.*

Cleghorn† is a glorious production of the Author of Man. You, He and the noble Colonel‡ of the Crochallan Fencibles, are to me

Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart. §

I have a good mind to make verses on you all, to the tune of 'Three gude fallows ayont yon glen.' By the way, do look in on poor Johnson how he comes on. I sent him a list of what *I would chuse* for his third Volume.

Adieu! God bless you! ROBT. BURNS.

* It was omitted in the 1793 ed. See finished version, p. 76.

† Robert Cleghorn of Saughton Mills.

‡ William Dunbar, W.S.

§ 'As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
That visit my sad heart.'—SHAKESPEARE'S *Julius Cæsar*.

TO MR WILLIAM BURNS, SADDLER, IN THE SHOP OF MR NICHOLSON, NEWGATE STREET, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

ELLISLAND, *5th May* 1789.

MY DEAR WILLIAM—I am happy to hear by yours from Newcastle, that you are getting some employ. Remember,

On Reason build Resolve,
That column of true majesty in man.

I had a visit of your old landlord. In the midst of a drunken frolic in Dumfries, he took it into his head to come and see me; and I took all the pains in my power to please and entertain the old veteran. He is high in your praises, and I would advise you to cultivate his friendship, as he is, in his way, a worthy, and to you may be a useful, man.

Anderson I hope will have your shoes ready to send by the waggon to-morrow. I forgot to mention the circumstance of making them pumps; but I suppose good calf shoes will be no great mistake. Wattie has paid me for the thongs.

What would you think of making a little inquiry how husbandry matters go, as you travel, and if one thing fail, you might try another?

Your falling in love is indeed a phenomenon. To a fellow of your turn it cannot be hurtful. I am, you know, a veteran in these campaigns, so let me advise you always to pay your particular assiduities and try for intimacy as soon as you feel the first symptoms of passion; this is not only best, as making the most of the little entertainment which the sportabilities of distant addresses always give, but is the best preservative for one's peace. I need not caution you about guilty amours—they are bad everywhere, but in England they are the devil. I shall be in Ayrshire about a fortnight. Your sisters send their compliments. God bless you! ROBERT BURNS.*

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

ELLISLAND, *13th May* 1789.

SIR,—Though I intend making a little manuscript-book of my unpublished poems for Mrs Graham, yet I cannot forbear in the meantime sending her the enclosed, which was the production of the other day.† In the plea of humanity, the ladies, to their honour be it spoken, are ever warmly interested. That is *one* reason of my troubling you with this; another motive I have is a hackneyed subject in my letters to you—

* It is possible, though not probable, that Burns may have misdated this letter, and that it was written in 1790. His brother William is not known positively to have lived in Newcastle till 1790, although he was in Longtown in March 1789, and in Morpeth in November of the same year. On the other hand, he may have obtained temporary employment in Newcastle before going to Morpeth.

† Probably the 'Verses on seeing a wounded hare.'

God help a poor devil who carries about with him a load of gratitude of which he can never hope to ease his shoulders but at the expense of his heart! I waited on Collector Mitchell with your letter. It happened to be collection-day, so he was very busy; but he received me with the utmost politeness, and made me promise to call on him soon. As I don't wish to degrade myself to a hungry rook, gaping for a morsel, I shall just give him a hint of my wishes. I am going on with a bold hand in my farm, and am certain of holding it with safety for three or four years; and I think, if some cursed malevolent star had not taken irremoveable possession of my zenith, that your patronage and my own priority then as an expectant, should run a fair chance for the division I want. By the bye, the Excise instructions you mentioned were not in the bundle; but 'tis no matter; Marshall in his *Yorkshire*,* and particularly that extraordinary man, Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations*, find me leisure employment enough. I could not have given any mere *man* credit for half the intelligence Mr Smith discovers in his book. I would covet much to have his ideas respecting the present state of some quarters of the world that are, or have been, the scenes of considerable revolutions since his book was written. Though I take the advantage of your goodness, and presume to send you any new poetic thing of mine, I must not tax you with answers to each of my idle letters. I remember you talked of being this way with my honoured friend, Sir William Murray, in the course of this summer. You cannot imagine, sir, how happy it would make me, should you, too, illuminate my humble domicile. You will certainly do me the honour to partake of a farmer's dinner with me. I shall promise you a piece of good old beef, a chicken or perhaps a Nith salmon fresh from the weir, and a glass of good punch, on the shortest notice; and allow me to say that Cincinnatus or Fabricius, who presided in the august Roman senate and led their invincible armies, would have jumped at such a dinner. I expect your honours with a kind of enthusiasm. I shall mark the year and mark the day, and hand it down to my children's children, as one of the most distinguished honours of their ancestor.

I have the honor to be, with sincerest gratitude, your obliged and very humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

TO LADY BETTY CUNNINGHAM, AT COATES, EDINBURGH.†

ELLISLAND, *near* DUMFRIES, 15*th May* 1789.

MY LADY—Though I claim the privilege your Ladyship's goodness allows me of sending you copies of anything I compose in the way of my Poetic Trade, I must not tax you with noticing each of my idle epistles.

* Wm. Marshall (1745–1818), agriculturist, &c., published *Rural Economy of England* in 12 vols.; first division (2 vols.) dealing with Norfolk and Suffolk (1787), second division (2 vols., 1788) dealing with Yorkshire. The last division appeared in 1798.

† Coates House is now an Episcopal College, and absorbed in the city of Edinburgh.

The inclosed piece, pleading the cause of Humanity, is for your Ladyship; the other, a specimen of the Author's Political Piety, I present with my humble respects to the noble Earl to whom I owe my All.

Though I had no other motive, I would continue to cultivate the acquaintance of the Muses for the sake of having an opportunity of assuring the Noble Family of Glencairn with what enthusiasm I have the honor to be the grateful creature of their bounty, and their very humble Servant, ROBT. BURNS.

Burns's tender affection for animals inspired some of his best verse: witness the 'Farmer's Address to his Mare,' the verses on 'The Winter Night,' the 'Address to the Mouse,' and several other pieces.* He could treat the passion of a Tam Samson jocularly; and it has been stated that 'when he visited Mr Bushby at Tinwald Downs, he would accompany the gentlemen-visitors to the field and look on at their sport.' His true feeling about field-sports appears, however, to be presented in 'The Brigs of Ayr:'

> The thundering guns are heard on ev'ry side,
> The wounded coveys, reeling, scatter wide;
> The feather'd field-mates, bound by Nature's tie,
> Sires, mothers, children, in one carnage lie:
> (What warm, poetic heart but inly bleeds,
> And execrates man's savage, ruthless deeds!)

The poem on the Hare was sent to Dr Gregory, of Edinburgh, of whose critical judgment and general character Burns, as we have seen, thought very highly. He who had been so lenient with Clarinda's versicles chose to be strict with this poem of Burns.

FROM DR GREGORY.

EDINBURGH, 2*d June* 1789.

DEAR SIR—I take the first leisure hour I could command, to thank you for your letter and the copy of verses enclosed in it. As there is real poetic merit, I mean both fancy and tenderness, and some happy expressions, in them, I think they well deserve that you should revise them carefully and polish them to the utmost. This I am sure you can

* 'Burns had a favourite collie at Ellisland, with this legend on its collar: ROBERT BURNS, POET.'—*A. Cunningham.*

'His last dog—a fine burly fellow, which survived him some time—was named THURLOW, which I suppose the poet had bestowed on him in compliment to the rough, manly character of the chancellor. You remember Thurlow's famous reply to the Duke of Grafton, in which he challenged comparison with the noble duke as A MAN. This could not fail to take a strong hold of the feelings of Burns.'—*R. Carruthers's MS.*

do if you please, for you have great command both of expression and of rhymes: and you may judge, from the two last pieces of Mrs Hunter's poetry * that I gave you, how much correctness and high polish enhance the value of such compositions. As you desire it, I shall with great freedom give you my *most rigorous* criticisms on your verses. I wish you would give me another edition of them, much amended, and I will send it to Mrs Hunter, who, I am sure, will have much pleasure in reading it. Pray give me likewise for myself, and her too, a copy (as much amended as you please) of the 'Water-fowl on Loch Turit.'

The 'Wounded Hare' is a pretty good subject, but the measure or stanza you have chosen for it is not a good one: it does not *flow* well; and the rhyme of the fourth line is almost lost by its distance from the first, and the two interposed, close rhymes. If I were you, I would put it into a different stanza yet.

Stanza 1.—The execrations in the first two lines are too strong or coarse, but they may pass. 'Murder-aiming' is a bad compound epithet and not very intelligible. 'Blood-stained,' in stanza iii., line 4, has the same fault: *Bleeding* bosom is infinitely better. You have accustomed yourself to such epithets and have no notion how stiff and quaint they appear to others and how incongruous with poetic fancy and tender sentiments. Suppose Pope had written 'Why that blood-stained bosom gored,' how would you have liked it? *Form* is neither a poetic nor a dignified nor a plain common word: it is a mere sportsman's word; unsuitable to pathetic or serious poetry.

'Mangled' is a coarse word. 'Innocent,' in this sense, is a nursery word; but both may pass.

Stanza 4.—'Who will now provide that life a mother only can bestow' will not do at all: it is not grammar—it is not intelligible. Do you mean 'provide for that life which the mother had bestowed and used to provide for?'

There was a ridiculous slip of the pen, 'Feeling' (I suppose) for 'Fellow,' in the title of your copy of verses; but even 'fellow' would be wrong: it is but a colloquial and vulgar word, unsuitable to your sentiments. 'Shot' is improper too. On seeing a *person* (or a sportsman) wound a hare: it is needless to add with what weapon; but if you think otherwise, you should say *with a fowling-piece.*

Let me see you when you come to town, and I will shew you some more of Mrs Hunter's poems.

'It must be admitted,' writes Currie, with his usual naïveté, 'that this criticism is not more distinguished by its good sense than by its freedom from ceremony. It is impossible not to smile at the manner in which the poet may be supposed to have received

* Anne Home (1742–1821), wife of the celebrated surgeon, John Hunter, was the author of 'My mother bids me bind my hair,' and many graceful lyrics. Her *Poems* were published in 1802.

it. In fact, it appears, as the sailors say, to have thrown him *quite aback*. In a letter which he wrote soon after, he says: 'Dr Gregory is a good man, but he crucifies me.' And again: 'I believe in the iron justice of Dr Gregory; but, like the devils, I believe and tremble.'

The piece, as the poet finally left it, is as follows:

ON SEEING A WOUNDED HARE LIMP BY ME, WHICH A FELLOW HAD JUST SHOT AT.

Inhuman man! curse on thy barb'rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye;
May never pity soothe thee with a sigh,
Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go live, poor wanderer of the wood and field,
The bitter little that of life remains!
No more the thickening brakes and verdant plains
To thee shall home, or food, or pastime yield.

Seek, mangled wretch, some place of wonted rest,
No more of rest, but now thy dying bed!
The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,
The cold earth with thy bloody bosom prest.

Oft as by winding Nith I, musing, wait
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,
I 'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
And curse the ruffian's aim and mourn thy hapless fate.*

The rhyming epistle † which follows was perhaps sent at this time to the eldest son of 'old Glenconner,' whose counsel Burns had taken in regard to his farm at Ellisland.

* Allan Cunningham mentions that the poor hare whose sufferings excited this burst of indignation on the part of the poet was shot by a lad named James Thomson, son of a farmer near Ellisland. Burns, who was near the Nith at the moment, execrated the young man, and threatened to throw him into the water.

† Although this poem has been generally assigned to the Ellisland period of Burns's life, with which such a line as 'For now I 'm grown sae cursed douce' accords better than with any other, it is possible that it may have been written in Mossgiel. The fact that 'My auld acquaintance, Nancy' (Mrs Reid of Barquharie), is spoken of as if she were alive, although she died—if the Glenconner tombstone in Ochiltree is to be trusted—on 14th June 1787, more than a year before Burns went to Ellisland, gives undoubted support to

TO JAMES TENNANT OF GLENCONNER.

Auld comrade dear and brither sinner,
How 's a' the folk about Glenconner?
How do you this blae eastlin wind — raw—easterly
That 's like to blaw a body blind?
For me, my faculties are frozen,
My dearest member nearly dozen'd. — benumbed
I 've sent you here, by Johnie Simson,*
Twa sage philosophers to glimpse on:
Smith, wi' his sympathetic feeling,†
An' Reid,† to common sense appealing.
Philosophers have fought and wrangled,
An' meikle Greek an' Latin mangled, — much
Till wi' their logic-jargon tir'd,
And in the depth of science mir'd,
To common sense they now appeal,
What wives and wabsters see and feel. — weavers
But, hark ye, friend! I charge you strictly,
Peruse them, an' return them quickly—
For now I 'm grown sae cursed douce — sedate
I pray and ponder butt the house: — *i.e.* in the kitchen
My shins, my lane, I there sit roastin', — alone
Perusing Bunyan, Brown an' Boston,‡
Till by an' by, if I haud on, — hold
I 'll grunt a real gospel groan:
Already I begin to try it,
To cast my e'en up like a pyet — magpie

the latter theory. On the other hand, the allusion to 'Auchenbay' would appear to be opposed to this view, as it is generally understood that John Tennant did not enter upon the farm of that name until he had given up the business of distiller. There seems to be no doubt, from a letter written by Burns from Ellisland in the end of 1788, that the friend of his youth was then in that business. The question of the date of such a poem as this 'Epistle' is not of material importance.

* 'Johnie Simson,' whom, as 'poor Simson,' James Tennant is asked in the fourth last line of the poem to 'assist,' is believed to have been a dancing-master. The object of the epistle was to induce 'the miller' to take Simson round the parish, and introduce him to possible patrons. The result, according to tradition, was 'the biggest dancing-class ever known in Ochiltree.'

† Adam Smith's *Theory of the Moral Sentiments* was published in 1759; *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense*, by Thomas Reid, D.D., in 1764.

‡ Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress, The Self-interpreting Bible* of Rev. John Brown of Haddington (1722-87), and *The Fourfold State* of Rev. Thomas Boston of Ettrick (1676-1732), used to be found in every pious Scottish household.

When by the gun she tumbles o'er
Flutt'ring an' gasping in her gore:
Sae shortly you shall see me bright,
A burning an' a shining light.

My heart-warm love to guid auld Glen,
The ace an' wale of honest men: — choice
When bending down wi' auld grey hairs
Beneath the load of years and cares
May He who made him still support him,
An' views beyond the grave comfort him;
His worthy fam'ly, far and near,
God bless them a' wi' grace and gear! — goods

My auld schoolfellow, preacher Willie;
The manly tar, my mason-Billie; — crony
An' Auchenbay, I wish him joy—
If he 's a parent,* lass or boy,
May he be *dad* and Meg the *mither*,
Just five-and-forty years thegither! — together
An' no forgetting wabster Charlie,
I 'm tauld he offers very fairly;
An' Lord, remember singing Sannock,
Wi' hale breeks, saxpence an' a bannock;† — whole trousers —scone
An' next, my auld acquaintance, Nancy,
Since she is fitted to her fancy,
An' her kind stars hae airted till her — directed to
A good chiel wi' a pickle siller; — fellow—little money
My kindest, best respects, I sen' it
To cousin Kate an' sister Janet:
Tell them, frae me, wi' chiels be cautious, — lads
For, faith, they 'll aiblins fin' them fashious: — possibly—troublesome
To grant a heart is fairly civil,
But to grant a maidenhead 's the devil;

* Supporters of the view that the 'Epistle' was written at Mossgiel find further confirmation in these two lines, which they maintain were written in anticipation of the birth (15th May 1786) of John Tennant's first child Jane. The report goes that when Burns was engaged on its composition, he heard that a messenger had arrived at Mauchline from Auchenbay, which was three miles distant, for a midwife.

† 'Fortune! if thou 'll but gie me still
Hale breeks, a scone, an' whisky gill.'—'Scotch Drink.'

An' lastly, Jamie, for yoursel,
May guardian angels tak a spell,
An' steer you seven miles south o' hell:
But first, before you see heaven's glory,
May ye get monie a merry story,
Monie a laugh and monie a drink,
And aye eneugh o' needfu' clink. money

Now fare ye well an' joy be wi' you:
For my sake this I beg it o' you,
Assist poor Simson a' ye can,
Ye'll fin' him just an honest man;
Sae I conclude, and quat my chanter,* quit
Yours, saint or sinner,

Rob the Ranter.†

TO MR RICHARD BROWN, PORT-GLASGOW.

Mauchline, 21*st May* 1789.

My dear Friend—I was in the country by accident, and hearing of your safe arrival, I could not resist the temptation of wishing you joy on your return — wishing you would write to me before you sail again—

* Chanter is part of a bagpipe.

† The various allusions to the Tennant family in this poem may here be explained. Its head, 'Guid Auld Glen,' is, of course, John Tennant (1726–1810), farmer in Glenconner, from 1769 to 1780 factor for the Ochiltree property of Elizabeth, Countess of Glencairn, and the friend both of Burns and of his father. He was thrice married, and the James Tennant to whom this epistle is addressed was one of the sons of the first marriage. He was five years Burns's senior, and having taken the mill at Ochiltree was popularly known as 'the miller.' 'My auld schoolfellow, preacher Willie,' was William Tennant (1758–1813), the eldest son of 'Auld Glen' by his second wife. Trained for the ministry of the Church of Scotland, he became chaplain to the forces in India, published two works based on his experiences there—*Indian Researches* and *Thoughts on the Effects of the British Government on the State of India*, and returned to Glenconner, where he died. The 'manly tar, my mason-Billie,' was David Tennant (1762–1839), third son of Glenconner. He entered the merchant service, and so distinguished himself in privateering against the French that he was offered a knighthood. He died in Swansea. 'Auchenbay' was John Tennant (1760–1853), Glenconner's second son by his second wife, who has frequently been alluded to in Vols. I. and III. Having tried business, first as a shipbuilder and then as a distiller (see Burns's letter to him from Ellisland, 22d December 1788, Vol. II. pp. 394-5), he leased the farm of Auchenbay in Ochiltree parish. He became noted as a skilful and successful agriculturist, and before he died purchased the estate of Creoch, in his native parish. 'Meg the mither' was his wife, Margaret Colville, whom he married in 1785, and who died in 1823. 'Wabster Charlie' was Charles Tennant (1768–1838), Glenconner's fourth son by his second wife. Sent by his father to Kilbarchan to learn weaving, he entered the bleaching business, and ultimately became founder of the chemical works at St Rollox, Glasgow, the

wishing you would always set me down as your bosom-friend—wishing you long life and prosperity, and that every good thing may attend you—wishing Mrs Brown and your little ones as free of the evils of this world as is consistent with humanity—wishing you and she were to make two at the ensuing lying-in with which Mrs B. threatens very soon to favor me—wishing I had longer time to write to you at present; and, finally, wishing that, if there is to be another state of existence, Mrs Brown, Mrs Burns, our little ones of both families, and you and I, in some snug retreat, may make a jovial party to all eternity! *

My direction is at Ellisland, near Dumfries. Yours, R. B.

TO MR JAMES HAMILTON, GROCER, GLASGOW.

ELLISLAND, *May* 26, 1789.

DEAR SIR—I send you by John Glover, Carrier, the above account for Mr Turnbull, as I suppose you know his address. I would fain offer, my dear Sir, a word of sympathy with your misfortunes; but it is a tender string and I know not how to touch it. It is easy to flourish a set of high-flown sentiments on the subject that would give great satisfaction to—a breast quite at ease; but, as ONE observes who was very seldom mistaken in the theory of life, 'The heart knoweth its own sorrows, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith.'

Among some distressful emergencies that I have experienced in life, I ever laid this down as my foundation of comfort—*That he who has lived the life of an honest man has by no means lived in vain.*

With every wish for your welfare and future success, I am, my dear Sir, Sincerely yours, ROBT. BURNS.

TO MR JOHN M'AULEY, DUMBARTON.†

ELLISLAND, *4th June* 1789.

DEAR SIR—Though I am not without my fears respecting my fate at that grand, universal inquest of right and wrong, commonly called *The Last Day*, yet I trust there is one sin which that arch-vagabond, Satan,

senior partner in the firm owning which is (1896) his descendant, Sir Charles Tennant of The Glen, Innerleithen. 'Singing Sannock' is understood to be Robert Tennant (1774–1841), sixth son of Glenconner by his second wife. He also entered the bleaching business, and died in Ireland. 'My auld acquaintance, Nancy,' was Agnes Tennant, eldest daughter of Glenconner. In 1785 she married George Reid of Barquharie, on whose pony Burns rode into Edinburgh. According to the family tombstone in Ochiltree churchyard, she died on 14th June 1787. 'Cousin Kate' was Katherine, daughter of Alexander Tennant, a younger brother of Glenconner. 'Sister Janet' was Janet Tennant (1766–1843), second daughter of Glenconner. She married Andrew Paterson, of Ayr, and died there.

* Brown was again at home from Grenada.

† See Vol. II., p. 131.

who, I understand, is to be king's evidence, cannot throw in my teeth, I mean ingratitude. There is a certain pretty large quantum of kindness for which I remain, and from inability, I fear, must still remain, your debtor; but though unable to repay the debt, I assure you, sir, I shall ever warmly remember the obligation. It gives me the sincerest pleasure to hear by my old acquaintance, Mr Kennedy,* that you are, in immortal Allan's [Ramsay] language, 'Hale and weel and living;' and that your charming family are well and promising to be an amiable and respectable addition to the company of performers whom the Great Manager of the Drama of Man is bringing into action for the succeeding age.

With respect to my welfare, a subject in which you once warmly and effectively interested yourself, I am here in my old way, holding my plough, marking the growth of my corn or the health of my dairy; and at times sauntering by the delightful windings of the Nith, on the margin of which I have built my humble domicile, praying for seasonable weather or holding an intrigue with the Muses, the only gypseys with whom I have now any intercourse. As I am entered into the holy state of matrimony, I trust my face is turned completely Zion-ward; and as it is a rule with all honest fellows to repeat no grievances, I hope that the little poetic licences of former days will, of course, fall under the oblivious influence of some good-natured statute of celestial prescription. In my family devotion, which, like a good Presbyterian, I occasionally give to my household folks, I am extremely fond of the psalm 'Let not the errors of my youth,' &c., and that other 'Lo, children are God's heritage,' &c., in which last Mrs Burns, who, by the by, has a glorious 'wood-note wild' at either old song or psalmody, joins me with the pathos of Handel's Messiah. R. B.

Robert Ainslie in his old age was in the habit of relating that Burns often quoted with great relish the verses from the 127th psalm in the familiar English translation still current in Scotland:

Lo, children are God's heritage,
  The womb's fruit his reward:
The sons of youth as arrows are,
  For strong men's hands prepared.
O happy is the man that hath
  His quiver filled with those;
They unashamed in the gate
  Shall speak unto their foes.

He used to add, that a young friend of his, an advocate, who afterwards became a judge with the title of Lord Cringletie, added greatly to the amusement of a company before which Burns

* Perhaps the (late) factor at Dumfries House.

had one evening repeated the lines, when, with great simplicity, he praised them as verses of the poet's own composition.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

ELLISLAND, *June* 8, 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I am perfectly ashamed of myself when I look at the date of your last. It is not that I forget the friend of my heart and the companion of my peregrinations; but I have been condemned to drudgery beyond sufferance, though not, thank God, beyond redemption. I have had a collection of poems by a lady put into my hands, to prepare them for the press; which horrid task, with sowing my corn with my own hand, a parcel of masons, wrights, plasterers, &c., to attend to, roaming on business through Ayrshire—all this was against me, and the very first dreadful article was of itself too much for me.

13*th*.—I have not had a moment to spare from incessant toil since the 8th. Life, my dear Sir, is a serious matter. You know by experience that a man's individual self is a good deal; but, believe me, a wife and family of children, whenever you have the honor to be a husband and a father, will shew you that your present and most anxious hours of solitude are spent on trifles. The welfare of those who are very dear to us, whose only support, hope and stay we are—this, to a generous mind, is another sort of more important object of care than any concerns whatever which centre merely in the individual. On the other hand, let no young, unmarried, rakehelly dog among you make a song of his pretended liberty and freedom from care. If the relations we stand in to king, country, kindred and friends be any thing but the visionary fancies of dreaming metaphysicans; if religion, virtue, magnanimity, generosity, humanity and justice be aught but empty sounds; then the man who may be said to live only for others, for the beloved, honorable female whose tender, faithful embrace endears life, and for the helpless little innocents who are to be the men and women, the worshippers of his God, the subjects of his king, and the support, nay, the very vital existence, of his COUNTRY, in the ensuing age;—compare such a man with any fellow whatever, who, whether he bustle and push in business among laborers, clerks, statesmen; or whether he roar and rant, and drink and sing in taverns—a fellow over whose grave no one will breathe a single heigh-ho, except from the cobweb-tie of what is called good-fellowship—who has no view nor aim but what terminates in himself—if there be any grovelling, earthborn wretch of our species, a renegado to common sense, who would fain believe that the noble creature Man is no better than a sort of fungus, generated out of nothing, nobody knows how, and soon dissipating in nothing, nobody knows where—such a stupid beast, such a crawling reptile, might balance the foregoing unexaggerated comparison, but no one else would have the patience.

Forgive me, my dear Sir, for this long silence. *To make you amends*, I shall send you soon, and, more encouraging still, without any postage, one or two rhymes of my later manufacture. R. B.

While residing at Ellisland, Burns with his family attended Dunscore church. The minister, Rev. Joseph Kirkpatrick, was a zealous Calvinist, and therefore not a favourite with the poet. This appears from a letter

TO MRS DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 21*st June* 1789.

DEAR MADAM—Will you take the effusions, the miserable effusions, of low spirits, just as they flow from their bitter spring? I know not of any particular cause for this worst of all my foes besetting me, but for some time my soul has been beclouded with a thickening atmosphere of evil imaginations and gloomy presages. . . .

Monday evening.

I have just heard Mr Kirkpatrick give a sermon. He is a man famous for his benevolence, and I revere him; but from such ideas of my Creator, good Lord deliver me! Religion, my honored friend, is surely a simple business, as it equally concerns the ignorant and the learned, the poor and the rich. That there is an incomprehensible Great Being, to whom I owe my existence, and that he must be intimately acquainted with the operations and progress of the internal machinery and consequent outward deportment of this creature which he has made: these are, I think, self-evident propositions. That there is a real and eternal distinction between virtue and vice, and, consequently, that I am an accountable creature; that from the seeming nature of the human mind, as well as from the evident imperfection, nay, positive injustice, in the administration of affairs, both in the natural and moral worlds, there must be a retributive scene of existence beyond the grave, must, I think, be allowed by every one who will give himself a moment's reflection. I will go further, and affirm that from the sublimity, excellence and purity of his doctrine and precepts, unparalleled by all the aggregated wisdom and learning of many preceding ages, though, *to appearance*, he himself was the obscurest and most illiterate of our species; therefore Jesus Christ was from God. . . .

Whatever mitigates the woes or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness; and whatever injures society at large or any individual in it, this is my measure of iniquity.

What think you, Madam, of my creed? I trust that I have said nothing that will lessen me in the eye of one whose good opinion I value almost next to the approbation of my own mind. R. B.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

ELLISLAND, 31*st July* 1789.

SIR—The language of gratitude has been so prostituted by servile adulation and designing flattery, that I know not how to express myself when I would acknowledge the receipt of your last letter. I beg and hope, ever-honoured

'Friend of my life! *true patron of my rhymes*,'

that you will always give me credit for the sincerest, chastest gratitude! The callous hypocrite may be louder than I in his grateful professions—professions which he never felt; or the selfish heart of the covetous may pocket the bounties of beneficence with more rejoicing exultation; but for the brimful eye, springing from the ardent throbbings of an honest bosom, at the goodness of a kindly active benefactor and politely generous friend, I dare call the Searcher of hearts and Author of all goodness to witness how truly these are mine to you.

Mr [Collector] Mitchell did not wait my calling on him, but sent me a kind letter giving me a hint of the business, and on my waiting on him yesterday, he entered with the most friendly ardour into my views and interests. He seems to think, and from my own private knowledge I am certain he is right, that removing the officer who now does, and for these many years has done, duty in the division in the middle of which I live, will be productive of at least no disadvantage to the revenue, and may likewise be done without any detriment to him. Should the Honourable Board think so, and should they deem it eligible to appoint me to officiate in his present place, I am then at the top of my wishes. The emoluments of my office will enable me to carry on and enjoy these improvements in my farm, which, but for this additional assistance, I might in a year or two have abandoned. Should it be judged improper to place me in this division, I am deliberating whether I had not better give up my farming altogether and go into the Excise whenever I can find employment. Now that the salary is £50 per annum, the Excise is surely a much superior object to a farm which, without some foreign assistance, must, for half a lease, be a losing bargain. The worst of it is, I know there are some respectable characters who do me the honour to interest themselves in my welfare and behaviour, and as leaving the farm so soon may have an unsteady, giddy-headed appearance, I had perhaps better lose a little money than hazard such people's esteem.

You see, sir, with what freedom I lay before you all my little matters—little indeed to the world, but of the most important magnitude to me. You are so good, that I trust I am not troublesome. I have heard and read a good deal of philanthropy, generosity, and greatness of soul, and when rounded with the flourish of declamatory periods, or poured in the mellifluence of Parnassian measure, they have a tolerable effect on a musical ear; but when these high-sounding professions are compared

with the very act and deed as it is usually performed, I do not think there is anything in or belonging to human nature so baldly disproportionate. In fact, were it not for a very few of our kind, among whom an honoured friend of mine, that to you, sir, I will not name, is a distinguished individual, the very existence of magnanimity, generosity and all their kindred virtues, would be as much a question among metaphysicians as the existence of witchcraft. Perhaps the nature of man is not so much to blame for all this, as the situation in which, by some miscarriage or other, he is placed in this world. The poor, naked, helpless wretch, with such voracious appetites and such a famine of provision for them, is under a cursed necessity of turning selfish in his own defence. Except here and there a scelerat, who seems to be a scoundrel from the womb of original sin, thorough-paced selfishness is always a work of time. Indeed, in a little time, we generally grow so attentive to ourselves and so regardless of others, that I have often in poetic frenzy looked on this world as one vast ocean, occupied and commoved by innumerable vortices, each whirling round its centre, which vortices are the children of men; and that the great design and merit, if I may say so, of every particular vortex consists in how wide it can extend the influence of its circle, and how much floating trash it can suck in and absorb.

I know not why I have got into this preaching vein, except it be to shew you, sir, that it is not my ignorance, but my knowledge, of mankind which makes me so much admire your goodness to your humble servant.

I hope this will find my amiable young acquaintance, John, recovered from his indisposition, and all the members of your charming fireside well and happy. I am sure I am anxiously interested in all their welfares; I wish it with all my soul, nay, I believe I sometimes catch myself praying for it. I am not impatient of my own impotence under that immense debt which I owe to your goodness, but I wish and beseech that BEING who has all good things in His hands, to bless and reward you with all those comforts and pleasures which He knows I would bestow on you, were they mine to give.

I shall return your books very soon. I only wish to give Dr Smith one other perusal, which I will do in two or three days. I do not think that I must trouble you for another cargo, at least for some time, as I am going to apply to Leadbetter and Symons * on Gauging, and to study my sliding rule, Brannan's rule, &c., with all possible attention.

An apology for the impertinent length of this epistle would only add to the evil.

I have the honour to be, sir, your deeply indebted, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

Helen Maria Williams,† who had been introduced to Burns by Dr Moore, sent him, in June 1787, a letter enclosing some poems

* Charles Leadbetter, *The Royal Gauger* (1739); Jelinger Symons, *Index to the Excise Laws* (1771).

† See note, Vol. II., p. 41.

which Moore had addressed to herself. She told Burns that, from her mother being a Scotchwoman, she had been enabled to understand the language of the Ayrshire bard, 'had read his poems with satisfaction, and shared the triumph of his country in producing his laurels.' She had sent him a poem of her own on the slave-trade. Burns criticised it in his next letter to her.

TO MISS WILLIAMS, LONDON.

ELLISLAND [*August*] 1789.

MADAM—Of the many problems in the nature of that wonderful creature, man, this is one of the most extraordinary, that he shall go on from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, or perhaps from year to year, suffering a hundred times more in an hour from the impotent consciousness of neglecting what he ought to do, than the very doing of it would cost him. I am deeply indebted to you, first, for a most elegant poetic compliment; then, for a polite, obliging letter; and, lastly, for your excellent poem on the slave-trade; and yet, wretch that I am! though the debts were debts of honour and the creditor a lady, I have put off and put off even the very acknowledgment of the obligation, until you must indeed be the very angel I take you for, if you can forgive me.

Your poem I have read with the highest pleasure. I have a way whenever I read a book—I mean a book in our own trade, madam, a poetic one—and when it is my own property, that I take a pencil and mark at the ends of verses or note on margins and odd paper, little criticisms of approbation or disapprobation as I peruse along. I will make no apology for presenting you with a few unconnected thoughts that occurred to me in my repeated perusals of your poem. I want to shew you that I have honesty enough to tell you what I take to be truths, even when they are not quite on the side of approbation; and I do it in the firm faith that you have equal greatness of mind to hear them with pleasure.

I know very little of scientific criticism; so all I can pretend to in that intricate art is merely to note, as I read along, what passages strike me as being uncommonly beautiful, and where the expression seems to be perplexed or faulty.

The poem opens finely. There are none of those idle prefatory lines which one may skip over before one comes to the subject. Verses 9th and 10th in particular—

> Where ocean's unseen bound
> Leaves a drear world of waters round—

are truly beautiful. The simile of the hurricane is likewise fine; and indeed, beautiful as the poem is, almost all the similes rise decidedly above it. From verse 31st to verse 50th is a pretty eulogy on Britain.

Verse 36th, 'That foul drama deep with wrong,' is nobly expressive. Verse 46th, I am afraid, is rather unworthy of the rest: 'to dare to feel' is an idea that I do not altogether like. The contrast of valour and mercy, from the 46th verse to the 50th, is admirable.

Either my apprehension is dull or there is something a little confused in the apostrophe to Mr Pitt. Verse 55th is the antecedent to verses 57th and 58th, but in verse 58th the connection seems ungrammatical:—

Powers * * *

With no gradations marked their flight,
But rose at once to glory's height.

'Ris'n' should be the word, instead of 'rose.' Try it in prose. Powers —their flight marked by no gradations, but [the same powers] risen at once to the height of glory. Likewise, verse 53d, 'For this,' is evidently meant to lead on the sense of the verses 59th, 60th, 61st and 62d; but let us try how the thread of connection runs—

For this * * *

The deeds of mercy, that embrace
A distant sphere, an alien race,
Shall virtue's lips record, and claim
The fairest honours of thy name.

I beg pardon if I misapprehend the matter, but this appears to me the only imperfect passage in the poem. The comparison of the sunbeam is fine.

The compliment to the Duke of Richmond is, I hope, as just as it is certainly elegant. The thought,

Virtue * * *
* * * *

Sends from her unsullied source,
The gems of thought their purest force,

is exceedingly beautiful. The idea, from verse 81st to the 85th, that the 'blest decree' is like the beams of morning ushering in the glorious day of liberty, ought not to pass unnoticed or unapplauded. From verse 85th to verse 108th is an animated contrast between the unfeeling selfishness of the oppressor on the one hand and the misery of the captive on the other. Verse 88th might perhaps be amended thus: 'Nor ever *quit* her narrow maze.' We are said to *pass* a bound, but we *quit* a maze. Verse 100th is exquisitely beautiful—

They, whom wasted blessings tire.

Verse 110th is, I doubt, a clashing of metaphors; 'to load a span' is, I am afraid, an unwarrantable expression. In verse 114th, 'Cast the universe in shade,' is a fine idea. From the 115th verse to the 142d is a striking description of the wrongs of the poor African. Verse 120th, 'The load of unremitted pain,' is a remarkable, strong expression. The

address to the advocates for abolishing the slave-trade, from verse 143d to verse 208th, is animated with the true life of genius. The picture of oppression

> While she links her impious chain,
> And calculates the price of pain;
> Weighs agony in sordid scales,
> And marks if life or death prevails—

is nobly executed.

What a tender idea is in verse 180th! Indeed, that whole description of home may vie with Thomson's description of home, somewhere in the beginning of his 'Autumn.' I do not remember to have seen a stronger expression of misery than is contained in these verses—

> Condemned, severe extreme, to live
> When all is fled that life can give.

The comparison of our distant joys to distant objects is equally original and striking.

The character and manners of the dealer in the infernal traffic is a well done, though a horrid, picture. I am not sure how far introducing the sailor was right; for though the sailor's common characteristic is generosity, yet in this case he is certainly not only an unconcerned witness, but in some degree an efficient agent in the business. Verse 224th is a nervous . . . expression—'The heart convulsive anguish breaks.' The description of the captive wretch when he arrives in the West Indies is carried on with equal spirit. The thought that the oppressor's sorrow on seeing the slave pine, like the butcher's regret when his destined lamb dies a natural death, is exceedingly fine.

I am got so much into the cant of criticism that I begin to be afraid lest I have nothing except the cant of it; and instead of elucidating my author, am only benighting myself. For this reason, I will not pretend to go through the whole poem. Some few remaining beautiful lines, however, I cannot pass over. Verse 280th is the strongest description of selfishness I ever saw. The comparison in verses 285th and 286th is new and fine; and the line, 'Your arms to penury you lend,' is excellent.

In verse 317th, 'like' should certainly be 'as' or 'so;' for instance—

> His sway the hardened bosom leads
> To cruelty's remorseless deeds:
> As (*or*, so) the blue lightning when it springs
> With fury on its livid wings,
> Darts on the goal with rapid force,
> Nor heeds that ruin marks its course.

If you insert the word 'like' where I have placed 'as,' you must alter 'darts' to 'darting' and 'heeds' to 'heeding,' in order to make it grammar. A tempest is a favourite subject with the poets, but I do not remember anything, even in Thomson's 'Winter,' superior to your

verses from the 347th to the 351st. Indeed, the last simile, beginning with 'Fancy may dress,' &c., and ending with the 350th verse, is, in my opinion, the most beautiful passage in the poem; it would do honor to the greatest names that ever graced our profession.

I will not beg your pardon, madam, for these strictures, as my conscience tells me that for once in my life I have acted up to the duties of a Christian, in doing as I would be done by.

I had lately the honour of a letter from Dr Moore, where he tells me that he has sent me some books; they are not yet come to hand, but I hear they are on the way.

Wishing you all success in your progress in the path of fame, and that you may equally escape the danger of stumbling, through incautious speed, or losing ground, through loitering neglect, I am, &c.,

R. B.

Miss Williams replied:

7th August 1789.

Dear Sir—I do not lose a moment in returning you my sincere acknowledgments for your letter and your criticism on my poem, which is a very flattering proof that you have read it with attention. I think your objections are perfectly just, except in one instance.

You have, indeed, been very profuse of panegyric on my little performance. A much less portion of applause from *you* would have been gratifying to me, since I think its value depends entirely upon the source from whence it proceeds—the incense of praise, like other incense, is more grateful from the quality than the quantity of the odour.

I hope you still cultivate the pleasures of poetry, which are precious even independent of the rewards of fame. Perhaps the most valuable property of poetry is its power of disengaging the mind from worldly cares, and leading the imagination to the richest springs of intellectual enjoyment; since, however frequently life may be chequered with gloomy scenes, those who truly love the Muse can always find one little path adorned with flowers and cheered by sunshine.

Burns's success in print was the signal for the issue of an extraordinary number of volumes of 'nonsense under the name of Scottish poetry.' Never at any previous time had Scotland been so inundated. The mania raged all over the country—as far north as Aberdeen—but was worst in the West. From the Wilson Press at Kilmarnock were issued volumes of *Poems* by Burns's old acquaintances Lapraik and Sillar. Burns had assisted in procuring subscribers for Sillar's volume.*

* *Poems*, by David Sillar (Kilmarnock, 1789, 8vo), contains a poem to Burns and also Burns's *Second Epistle to Davie.* (See Vol. I., pp. 210–212.)

TO MR DAVID SILLAR, MERCHANT, IRVINE.

ELLISLAND, *near Dumfries, 5th August* 1789.

MY DEAR SIR—I was half in thoughts not to have written to you at all, by way of revenge for the two d——d business letters you sent me. I wanted to know all about your Publication—what were your views, your hopes, fears, etc., etc., in commencing poet in print. In short, I wanted you to write to *Robin* like his old acquaintance *Davie;* and not in the style of Mr Tare to Mr Tret :—'Mr Tret—Sir, This comes to advise you that fifteen barrels of herrings were, by the blessing of God, shipped safe on board the 'Lovely Janet,' Q.D.C., Duncan M'Leerie, master, etc., etc.'

I hear you have commenced married man—so much the better for it.. I know not whether the Nine Gypsies are jealous of my Lucky ;* but they are a good deal shyer since I could boast the important relation of Husband.

I have got, I think, about eleven subscribers for your book. When you send Mr Auld, in Dumfries, his copies, you may with them pack me eleven ; should I need more, I can write you ; should they be too many, they can be returned. My best compliments to Mrs Sillar, and believe me to be, dear David, ever yours, ROBT. BURNS.

In his rides between Nithsdale and Ayrshire, Burns had several times visited a small laird or yeoman, named Logan, styled 'of Knockshinnoch,' but residing at Laight, both of which places are in the beautiful Vale of the Afton.† Another laird, Johnston of Clackleith, residing in the same valley, had likewise formed the acquaintance of Burns on these occasions.

TO MR JOHN LOGAN.

ELLISLAND, *near Dumfries, 7th Aug.* 1789.

DEAR SIR—I intended to have written you long ere now, and as I told you I had gotten three stanzas and a half on my way in a poetic epistle to you ; but that old enemy of all *good works*, the devil, threw me into a prosaic mire, and for the soul of me I cannot get out of it. I dare not write you a long letter, as I am going to intrude on your time with a long ballad. I have, as you will shortly see, finished 'The Kirk's Alarm ;' but, now that it is done and that I have laughed once or twice at the conceits in some of the stanzas, I am determined not to let it get

* Burns is here playfully alluding to his own wife. 'Lucky' is generally applied to the keeper of an inn.

† See Vol. I., p. 384.

into the public; so I send you this copy, the first that I have sent to Ayrshire, except some few of the stanzas which I wrote off in embryo for Gavin Hamilton, under the express provision and request that you will only read it to a few of us, and do not on any account give, or permit to be taken, any copy of the ballad. If I could be of any service to Dr M'Gill, I would do it, though it should be at a much greater expense than irritating a few bigoted priests, but I am afraid serving him in his present *embarras* is a task too hard for me. I have enemies enow, God knows, though I do not wantonly add to the number. Still, as I think there is some merit in two or three of the thoughts, I send it to you as a small, but sincere, testimony how much, and with what respectful esteem, I am, dear Sir, your obliged humble servant,

R. B.

The poem alluded to was a satire evoked by an ecclesiastical case in which Burns was strongly moved to take a side by two motives—personal friendship and his sympathy with heterodoxy. Dr William M'Gill, one of the two ministers conjoined in the parochial charge of Ayr, had published, in 1786, *A Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ, in Two Parts; containing*, 1, *the History*, 2, *the Doctrine of his Death*, which was supposed to inculcate both Arian and Socinian principles, and provoked many severe censures from the more orthodox party in the Church. M'Gill remained silent under the attacks of his opponents, till Dr William Peebles, of Newton-upon-Ayr, a neighbour, and up to that time a friend, in preaching a centenary sermon on the Revolution, November 5, 1788, denounced the essay as heretical, and the author as one who 'with one hand received the privileges of the Church, while with the other he was endeavouring to plunge the keenest poniard into her heart.' M'Gill published a defence, which led, in April 1789, to the case being taken up by the Presbytery of Ayr, and subsequently by the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr. The General Assembly in the following May remitted to a Committee of fifteen ministers and ten elders (including 'Holy Willie') to draw up an abstract of objectionable passages from the book, and lay it before the Presbytery. Meanwhile, the public out of doors was deeply agitated by the question, and the strife between the liberal and the zealous party in the Church reached a painful climax. It was now that Burns took up the pen in behalf of M'Gill, whom he looked on as a worthy and enlightened man suffering persecution.

THE KIRK'S ALARM—A BALLAD.

TUNE—*Come rouse, brother Sportsmen.*

Orthodox, Orthodox, who believe in John Knox,
Let me sound an alarm to your conscience :
There 's a heretic blast has been blawn i' the west,
That 'what is not sense must be nonsense,'
Orthodox ! That 'what is not sense must be nonsense.'

Doctor Mac,* Doctor Mac, ye should stretch on a rack,
To strike evil-doers wi' terror ;
To join Faith and Sense, upon any pretence,
Was heretic, damnable error,
Doctor Mac ! 'Twas heretic, damnable error.

Town of Ayr,† town of Ayr, it was rash, I declare,
To meddle wi' mischief a-brewing ;
Provost John is still deaf to the Church's relief,
And orator Bob ‡ is its ruin,
Town of Ayr ! Yes orator Bob is its ruin.

D'rymple mild, D'rymple mild,§ tho' your heart 's like a child,
And your life 's like the new-driven snaw,
Yet that winna save ye, old Satan must have ye,
For preaching that three 's ane and twa,
D'rymple mild ! For preaching that three 's ane and twa.

* Dr M'Gill was a Socinian or Unitarian in principle, though not a student of the works of Socinus [see below], none of which he had ever read. He was a strange mixture of simplicity and stoicism. He seldom smiled, but often set the table in a roar by his quaint remarks. He was inflexibly regular in the distribution of his time : he studied so much every day, and took his walk at the same hour in all sorts of weather. He played at golf a whole twelvemonth without the omission of a single week-day, except the three on which there were religious services at the time of the communion. His views of many of the dispensations of Providence were widely different from those of the bulk of society. A friend told him of an old clergyman, an early companion of his own, who, having entered the pulpit in his canonicals, and being about to commence service, fell back and expired in a moment. Dr M'Gill clapped his hands together, and said : 'That was very desirable ; he lived all the days of his life.' The morning after a domestic calamity of the most harrowing kind, the reverend doctor, to the surprise of his flock, officiated in church with his usual serenity. He conversed on self-murder with the coolness of a Roman philosopher.

† When Dr M'Gill's case first came before the Synod, the magistrates of Ayr published an advertisement in the newspapers, bearing warm testimony to the excellence of the defender's character and to their appreciation of his services as a pastor.

‡ It is scarcely necessary to say that 'Provost John' is John Ballantyne, and 'orator Bob' Robert Aiken.

§ Rev. Dr William Dalrymple, senior minister of the collegiate charge of Ayr—a man

Calvin's sons, Calvin's sons, seize your spiritual guns,
Ammunition ye never can need;
Your hearts are the stuff will be powder enough,
And your skulls are a storehouse o' lead,
Calvin's sons, and your skulls are a storehouse o' lead.

Rumble John,* Rumble John, mount the steps with a groan,
Cry, the book is with heresy cramm'd;
Then lug out your ladle, deal brimstone like aidle, muck-water
And roar every note o' the Damn'd,
Rumble John, and roar every note o' the Damn'd.

Simper James,† Simper James, leave the fair Killie dames,
There's a holier chase in your view;
I'll lay on your head that the Pack ye'll soon lead,
For Puppies like you there's but few,
Simper James, for Puppies like you there's but few.

Singet Sawnie, ‡ Singet Sawnie, are ye herding singed—hoarding
the Penny,
Unconscious what danger awaits?
With a jump, yell and howl, alarm every soul,
For Hannibal's just at your gates,
Singet Sawnie! For Hannibal's just at your gates.

Poet Willie, § Poet Willie, gie the Doctor a volley,
Wi' your 'liberty's chain' and your wit;
O'er Pegasus' side ye ne'er laid a stride,
Ye only stood by where he sh—,
Poet Willie! Ye only stood by where he sh—.

Barr Steenie, Barr Steenie, what mean ye? what mean ye?
If ye'll meddle nae mair wi' the matter,

of extraordinary benevolence. It is related that, one day meeting an almost naked beggar in the country, he took off his coat and waistcoat, gave the latter to the poor man, then put on his coat, buttoned it up, and walked home. He died in 1814. His connection with Burns will be dealt with in the final volume of this work.

* Rev. John Russell, celebrated in 'The Holy Fair.'

† Rev. James Mackinlay, minister of Kilmarnock, the hero of 'The Ordination.'

‡ Rev. Alexander Moodie, of Riccarton, one of the heroes of 'The Twa Herds.'

§ Rev. William Peebles (see note, Vol. I., p. 363) had excited some ridicule by a line in a poem on the Centenary of the Revolution:

'And bound in *Liberty's* endearing *chain*.'

‖ Rev. Stephen Young, minister of Barr, 1780–1819.

Ye may hae some pretence, man, to havins and sense, manners
man,
Wi' people that ken you nae better,
Barr Steenie! Wi' people that ken you nae better.

Jamie Goose,* Jamie Goose, ye hae made but toom roose empty boast
O' hunting the wicked Lieutenant;
But the Doctor 's your mark, for the L—d's holy ark, holy
He has cooper'd and ca'd a wrang pin in, driven
Jamie Goose! He has cooper'd and ca'd a wrang pin in.

Davie Bluster,† Davie Bluster, for a saunt if ye muster,
It 's a sign they 're no nice o' recruits;
Yet to worth let 's be just, Royal Blood ye might boast—
If the Ass were the king o' the brutes,
Davie Bluster! If the Ass were the king o' the brutes.

Cessnock-side,‡ Cessnock-side, wi' your turkey-cock pride,
O' manhood but sma' is your share:
Ye 've the figure, it 's true, even your faes maun allow, foes
And your friends darena say ye hae mair,
Cessnock-side! And your friends darena say ye hae mair.

Muirlan' Jock,§ Muirlan' Jock, whom the Lord gave a stock
Would set up a tinkler in brass;
If ill manners were wit, there 's no mortal so fit
To prove the poor Doctor an ass,
Muirlan' Jock! To prove the poor Doctor an ass.

Andrew Gowk,‖ Andrew Gowk, ye may slander the book,
And the book nought the waur, let me tell ye: worse
Tho' ye 're rich and look big, yet lay by hat and wig,
And ye 'll hae a *calf's head* o' sma' value,
Andrew Gowk! And ye 'll hae a *calf's head* o' sma' value.

* Rev. James Young became minister of New Cumnock in 1757 and died in 1795.

† Rev. David Grant was minister of Ochiltree from 1786 till his death in 1791.

‡ Rev. George Smith, Galston. This gentleman is praised as friendly to Common Sense in 'The Holy Fair.' The offence which was taken at that compliment probably embittered the poet against him. See note, Vol. I., p. 362.

§ Rev. John Shepherd, minister of Muirkirk from 1775 till his death in 1799. The statistical account of Muirkirk, contributed by this gentleman to Sir John Sinclair's work, is very well written. He had, however, an unfortunate habit of saying rude things, which he mistook for wit, and thus laid himself open to Burns's satire.

‖ Dr Andrew Mitchell, minister of Monkton from 1775 till 1811. He perhaps 'looked big,'

Daddie Auld,* Daddie Auld, there 's a tod i' the fauld, fox—fold
A tod meikle waur than the Clerk ;† much worse
Tho' ye do little skaith, ye 'll be in at the death, harm
For if ye canna bite, ye can bark,
Daddie Auld! For if ye canna bite, ye can bark.

Poet Burns, Poet Burns, wi' your priest-skelping turns, hitting
Why desert ye your auld native Shire?
Tho' your Muse is a gipsy, yet were she even tipsy,
She could ca' us nae waur than we are,
Poet Burns! She could ca' us nae waur than we are.

Holy Will,‡ Holy Will, there was wit in your skull,
When ye pilfer'd the alms o' the poor;
The timmer is scant when ye 're ta'en for a saint, timber
Wha should swing in a rape for an hour, rope
Holy Will! Ye should swing in a rape for an hour.

PRESENTATION STANZAS.

Factor John, Factor John, whom the Lord made alone,
And ne'er made another thy peer,
Thy poor servant, the Bard, in respectful regard,
Presents thee this token sincere,
Factor John,§ He presents thee this token sincere.

Afton's Laird! Afton's Laird, when your pen can be spared,
A copy of this I bequeath,
On the same sicker score as I mention'd before,
To that trusty auld worthy, Clackleith,
Afton's Laird! To that trusty auld worthy, Clackleith.

because he was the son of Hugh Mitchell, laird of Dalgain, in the eastern part of Ayrshire, and his mother was one of the Campbells of Fairfield. He himself was laird of Avisyard, in the neighbourhood of Cumnock. Extreme love of money, and a strange confusion of ideas, characterised this clergyman. In his prayer for the royal family, he would express himself thus: 'Bless the King—his Majesty the Queen—her Majesty the Prince of Wales.' The word chemistry he pronounced in three different ways—*hemistry, shemistry,* and *tchemistry* —but never by any chance in the right way. Notwithstanding the antipathy he could scarcely help feeling towards Burns, one of the poet's comic verses would make him laugh heartily, and confess that, 'after all, he was a droll fellow.' He died 1811, aged eighty-six.

* Rev. Mr Auld, of Mauchline.

† Mr Gavin Hamilton.

‡ William Fisher, whom Burns had already immortalised. As already noted, it has never been proved that 'Holy Willie' did 'pilfer' the alms-box. See Vol. I., p. 190.

§ It does not seem uncertain whether 'Factor John' was John M'Murdo, chamberlain to the Duke of Queensberry, John Kennedy, factor to the Earl of Dumfries, or John Tennant of Glenconner, who was for some time factor to the Earl of Glencairn.

TO [MR ROBERT AIKEN(?)].

[ELLISLAND, *August* 1789.]

DEAR SIR—Whether in the way of my trade I can be of any service to the Rev. Doctor is, I fear, very doubtful. Ajax's shield consisted, I think, of seven bull hides and a plate of brass, which altogether set Hector's utmost force at defiance. Alas! I am not a Hector, and the worthy Doctor's foes are as securely armed as Ajax was. Ignorance, superstition, bigotry, stupidity, malevolence, self-conceit, envy — all strongly bound in a massy frame of brazen impudence. Good God, Sir! to such a shield, humor is the peck of a sparrow and satire the pop-gun of a school-boy. Creation-disgracing *scelerats* such as they, God only can mend and the Devil only can punish. In the comprehending way of Caligula, I wish they had all but one neck. I feel impotent as a child to the ardor of my wishes! O for a withering curse to blast the germins of their wicked machinations. O for a poisonous Tornado winged from the Torrid Zone of Tartarus, to sweep the spreading crop of their villainous contrivances to the lowest hell! R. B.

The war raged till, in April 1790, the case came on for trial before the Synod, when Dr M'Gill stopped further procedure by expressing his deep regret for the disquiet he had occasioned, explaining the challenged passages of his book, and declaring his adherence to the standards of the Church on the points of doctrine in question.*

The date of Burns's appointment to active service as an excise-man in his district would seem to be approximately fixed by a manuscript volume which has recently been discovered, bearing the title 'List of all the Divisions, officers, expectants, &c., in Scotland as they stand at 10th October 1789.'† The first entry relating to the poet is dated 1789, and it states that at that time he was twenty-nine years of age, that he had been a quarter of a year employed, and that he had six of a family. The official 'character' placed against his name, in all probability by the supervisor of his district, is 'Never tryed; a Poet; Turns out well.' It is therefore extremely probable that on receiving his appointment he entered upon his new duties at once. On being informed that he had received the position he had requested, he sent his thanks in the form of a sonnet:

* Dr M'Gill died March 30, 1807, at the age of seventy-six, and in the forty-sixth year of his ministry.

† This volume is now (1896) in the possession of Mr James Davidson, Hamilton Place, Aberdeen.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY,

ON RECEIVING A FAVOUR, 10TH AUGUST 1789.

I call no goddess to inspire my strains,
A fabled Muse may suit a bard that feigns;
Friend of my life! my ardent spirit burns,
And all the tribute of my heart returns,
For boons accorded, goodness ever new,
The gift still dearer, as the Giver You.
Thou Orb of day! thou other Paler Light!
And all ye many sparkling stars of night!
If aught that Giver from my mind efface;
If I that Giver's bounty e'er disgrace;
Then roll, to me, along your wand'ring spheres,
Only to number out a villain's years!
I lay my hand upon my swelling breast,
And grateful would, but cannot, speak the rest.

TO MR WILLIAM BURNS.

ELLISLAND, 14*th Aug.* 1789.

MY DEAR WILLIAM—I received your letter, and am very happy to hear that you have got settled for the winter. I enclose you the two guinea-notes of the Bank of Scotland, which I hope will serve your need. It is indeed not quite so convenient for me to spare the money as it once was, but I know your situation, and, I will say it, in some respects, your worth. I have no time to write at present, but I beg you will endeavour to pluck up a *little* more of the Man than you used to have. Remember my favorite quotations:

On reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in Man.

What proves the Hero truly great
Is never, never to despair.

Your mother* and sisters desire their compliments. *A Dieu je vous commende.*

ROBT. BURNS.

* Burns's mother had at this time paid a visit to Ellisland. She brought the poet's eldest son, Robert, from Mossgiel.

Burns, as has been seen, did not occupy the whole of his house at Ellisland in the beginning of 1789; indeed, he addressed letters to his brother William in March, dating from the Isle. Elizabeth Smith remembered the removal from the Isle to Ellisland, though she was uncertain about the date. 'Burns,' runs the familiar story, 'made her take the Family Bible and a bowl of salt, and placing the one upon the other, carry them to the new house, and walk into it before any one else. This was the old *freit* [superstitious usage] appropriate to the taking possession of a new house, the object being to secure good-luck for all who should tenant it. He himself, with his wife on his arm, followed the bearer of the Bible and salt, and so entered upon the possession of his home.' On the 18th of August, Jean gave birth to a child, who was named Francis Wallace, in honour of Mrs Dunlop.

Burns appears to have believed that he could make not less than forty pounds a year by the Excise work, into which he now threw himself. According to Allan Cunningham, he contemplated working his farm chiefly as a dairy-farm. His sisters were skilled makers of butter and cheese and had imparted their knowledge to Mrs Burns. He thought that, while Jean, with the assistance of some of her west-country girls, managed the cows and their produce, he himself might work as a gauger, and still have time enough for whatever was left for him to do on the dairy-farm.

FROM PETER STUART.

LONDON, *5th August* 1789.

MY DEAR SIR—Excuse me when I say that the uncommon abilities which you possess must render your correspondence very acceptable to any one. I can assure you I am particularly proud of your partiality, and shall endeavour, by every method in my power, to merit a continuance of your politeness. . . .

When you can spare a few moments, I should be proud of a letter from you, directed for me, Gerrard Street, Soho. . . .

I cannot express my happiness sufficiently at the instance of your attachment to my late inestimable friend, Bob Fergusson,* who was particularly intimate with myself and relations. While I recollect with

* The erection of a monument to him. See Vol. II., pp. 58, 59.

pleasure his extraordinary talents and many amiable qualities, it affords me the greatest consolation that I am honoured with the correspondence of his successor in national simplicity and genius. That Mr Burns has refined in the art of poetry must readily be admitted; but, notwithstanding many favourable representations, I am yet to learn that he inherits his convivial powers.

There was such a richness of conversation, such a plentitude of fancy and attraction, in him, that when I call the happy period of our intercourse to my memory, I feel myself in a state of delirium. I was then younger than him by eight or ten years, but his manner was so felicitous that he enraptured every person around him and infused into the hearts of the young and old the spirit and animation which operated on his own mind. I am, Dear Sir, Yours, &c. P. STUART.

TO MR PETER STUART.

[*August*] 1789.

MY DEAR SIR—The hurry of a farmer in this particular season, and the indolence of a poet at all times and seasons, will, I hope, plead my excuse for neglecting so long to answer your obliging letter of the fifth of August.

That you have done well in quitting your laborious concern in [*The Star*], I do not doubt; the weighty reasons you mention were, I hope, very, and deservedly, indeed, weighty ones, and your health is a matter of the last importance; but whether the remaining proprietors of the paper have also done well, is what I much doubt. The [*Star*], so far as I was a reader, exhibited such a brilliancy of point, such an elegance of paragraph, and such a variety of intelligence, that I can hardly conceive it possible to continue a daily paper in the same degree of excellence: but if there was a man who had abilities equal to the task, that man's assistance the proprietors have lost. . . .

When I received your letter, I was transcribing for [*The Star*] my letter to the magistrates of the Canongate, Edinburgh, begging their permission to place a tomb-stone over poor Fergusson, and their edict in consequence of my petition; but now I shall send them to * * * * * *. Poor Fergusson! If there be a life beyond the grave, which I trust there is; and if there be a good God presiding over all nature, which I am sure there is; thou art now enjoying existence in a glorious world, where worth of the heart alone is distinction in the man; where riches, deprived of all their pleasure-purchasing powers, return to their native sordid matter; where titles and honors are the disregarded reveries of an idle dream; and where that heavy virtue, which is the negative consequence of steady dulness, and those thoughtless, though often destructive, follies, which are the unavoidable aberrations of frail human nature, will be thrown into equal oblivion as if they had never been!

Adieu, my dear Sir. So soon as your present views and schemes are concentered in an aim, I shall be glad to hear from you; as your welfare and happiness is by no means a subject indifferent to—Yours, &c., R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

Ellisland, *6th Sept.* 1789.

Dear Madam—I have mentioned in my last my appointment to the Excise and the birth of little Frank, who, by the bye, I trust will be no discredit to the honorable name of Wallace, as he has a fine manly countenance and a figure that might do credit to a little fellow two months older; and likewise an excellent good temper, though when he pleases he has a pipe, only not quite so loud as the horn that his immortal namesake blew as a signal to take out the pin of Stirling bridge.*

I had some time ago an epistle, part poetic and part prosaic, from your poetess, Miss J. Little,† a very ingenious, but modest, composition. I should have writtten her as she requested, but for the hurry of this new business. I have heard of her and her compositions in this country; and, I am happy to add, always to the honor of her character. The fact is, I know not well how to write to her: I should sit down to a sheet of paper that I knew not how to stain. I am no dab at fine-drawn letter-writing; and, except when prompted by friendship or gratitude, or, which happens extremely rarely, inspired by the Muse (I know not her name) that presides over epistolary writing, I sit down, when necessitated to write, as I would sit down to beat hemp.

Some parts of your letter of the 20th August, struck me with the most melancholy concern for the state of your mind at present. . . .

Would I could write you a letter of comfort! I would sit down to it with as much pleasure as I would to write an epic poem of my own composition that should equal the *Iliad*. Religion, my dear friend, is the true comfort! A strong persuasion in a future state of existence;

* Fra Jop the horn he hyntyt and couth blaw
Sa asprely, and warned gud Jhon Wricht:
The rowar out he straik with gret slycht;
The laiff zeid doun, quhen the pynnysont gais.
A hidwys cry amang the peple rais;
Bathe hors and men in to the wattir fell.
Schir William Wallace, book vii. lines 1180–5.

Jop (formerly Grymmysbe) was a pursuivant of Edward.

† Janet Little (1759–1813), 'the Scottish milkmaid,' was at this time in charge of the dairy at Loudon Castle, where Mrs Henrie, Mrs Dunlop's daughter, lived. It is not known if Burns replied to her letter. She afterwards visited Ellisland to obtain an interview with Burns, but failed, as the poet was confined to bed with a broken arm. She published a volume of poems in 1792; became wife of John Richmond, a labourer at Loudon Castle, and died in 1813.

a proposition so obviously probable, that, setting revelation aside, every nation and people, so far as investigation has reached, for at least four thousand years, have, in some mode or other, firmly believed it. In vain would we reason and pretend to doubt. I have myself done so to a very daring pitch; but when I reflected that I was opposing the most ardent wishes and the most darling hopes of good men, and flying in the face of all human belief, in all ages, I was shocked at my own conduct.

I know not whether I have ever sent you the following lines or if you have ever seen them; but it is one of my favorite quotations, which I keep constantly by me in my progress through life, in the language of the book of Job,

Against the day of battle and of war—

spoken of religion:

'Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright,
'Tis *this* that gilds the horror of our night:
When wealth forsakes us and when friends are few;
When friends are faithless or when foes pursue;
'Tis this that wards the blow or stills the smart,
Disarms affliction or repels his dart;
Within the breast bids purest raptures rise,
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.*

I have been very busy with *Zeluco*.† The doctor is so obliging as to request my opinion of it; and I have been revolving in my mind some kind of criticisms on novel-writing, but it is a depth beyond my research. I shall, however, digest my thoughts on the subject as well as I can. *Zeluco* is a most sterling performance.

Farewell! *A Dieu, le bon Dieu, je vous commende.* R. B.

We have to turn from this serious letter to two of the merriest episodes of Burns's life. The first was that which gave rise to his well-known song 'Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut!' Burns's note upon this ditty gives its history: 'This air is [Allan] Masterton's; the song, mine. The occasion of it was this: Mr William Nicol, of the High School, Edinburgh, during the autumn vacation being at Moffat, honest Allan—who was at that time on a visit to Dalswinton—and I, went to pay Nicol a visit. We had such a joyous meeting, that Mr Masterton and I agreed, each in our own way, that we should celebrate the business.'‡

* See note, Vol. II., p. 256.

† *Zeluco* was published in 1789.

‡ The exact spot where the meeting was held is said to have been 'Willie's Mill,' on the road between Moffat and 'Tibbie Shiels's' Inn, and close to Craigieburn, where 'Chloris' (Jean Lorimer) was born.

WILLIE BREW'D A PECK O' MAUT.

O Willie brew'd a peck o' maut, — malt
And Rob and Allan cam to pree; * — taste
Three blyther hearts, that lee-lang night, — live-long
Ye wad na found in Christendie.

Chorus—We are na fou, we 're nae that fou, — full [drunk]
But just a drappie in our e'e; — drop—eye
The cock may craw, the day may daw, — dawn
And ay we 'll taste the barley bree. — brew, juice

Here are we met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys, I trow, are we;
And mony a night we 've merry been,
And mony mae we hope to be! — more

It is the moon, I ken her horn,
That 's blinkin' in the lift sae hie; — heavens—high
She shines sae bright to wyle us hame, — lure
But, by my sooth, she 'll wait a wee! — a while

Wha first shall rise to gang awa,
A cuckold, coward loun is he! — fellow
Wha first beside his chair shall fa', †
He is the King amang us three!

The second affair alluded to was one in which some of the Nithsdale gentlemen of Burns's acquaintance were concerned. The poet, in introducing the ballad composed on the occasion, relates the following tradition: 'In the train of Anne of Denmark, when she came to Scotland with our James the Sixth, there came over also a Danish gentleman of gigantic stature and great prowess, and a matchless champion of Bacchus. He had a little ebony Whistle, which, at the commencement of the orgies, he laid on the table; and whoever was last able to blow it, every body else being

* Variation in Johnson's *Museum*—'And Rob and Allan cam to *see*.'

† Variation—'Wha *last* beside his chair shall fa'.' This is as given in Johnson's *Museum*.

G. O. Reid, A.R.S.A.

It is the moon, I ken her horn.

disabled by the potency of the bottle, was to carry off the Whistle as a trophy of victory. The Dane produced credentials of his victories, without a single defeat, at the courts of Copenhagen, Stockholm, Moscow, Warsaw, and several of the petty courts in Germany; and challenged the Scots Bacchanalians to the alternative of trying his prowess or else of acknowledging their inferiority. After many overthrows on the part of the Scots, the Dane was encountered by Sir Robert Lawrie of Maxwelton, ancestor to the present worthy baronet of that name; who, after three days and three nights' hard contest, left the Scandinavian under the table,

And blew on the Whistle his requiem shrill.

Sir Walter, son to Sir Robert before mentioned, afterwards lost the whistle to Walter Riddel of Glenriddel, who had married a sister of Sir Walter's.' *

The whistle being now in the possession of Captain Riddel, Burns's neighbour at Friars' Carse, it was resolved that he should submit it to an amicable competition between himself and two other descendants of the conqueror of the Scandinavian—namely, Alexander Fergusson of Craigdarroch, and Sir Robert Lawrie of Maxwelton, then M.P. for Dumfriesshire.† The meeting was to take place at Friars' Carse on Friday, the 16th of October; and

* 'There are some odd blunders in the legend of the Whistle, which a pedigree of the Maxwelton family in my possession enables me to mention. There was no Sir Robert Lawrie of Maxwelton prior to or during the reign of James VI. Stephen, the third son of John Lawrie, the first of the family on record, and an inhabitant of Dumfries, purchased the lands of Maxwelton from the Earl of Glencairn in 1614. He was succeeded by his son John, who died in the year 1649; and his son and heir, Robert, was created a baronet on the 27th March 1685. By his second wife, Jean Riddel, daughter of the Laird of Minto, he had three sons and four daughters, of whom Catherine was married to Walter Riddel of Glenriddel, and Anne to Alexander Fergusson of Craigdarroch. His son Robert was killed, when a lad, by a fall from his horse, in 1702. So the story of Queen Anne's drunken Dane may be regarded as a groundless fable, unless such a person came over in the train of Prince George of Denmark, the husband of our last Queen Anne, which is not very probable.'—*Charles K. Sharpe*, in 2d edition of Johnson's *Musical Museum* (1839), iv. 362. It is nevertheless, evidently, to the first baronet that the legend recorded by Burns refers, as his successor's successor was a son, Sir Walter, a contemporary of Walter Riddel of Glenriddel. The story had probably some such foundation as that described, though Burns's dates are wrong.

† Sir Robert Lawrie (or Laurie) represented Dumfriesshire for thirty years—from 1774 till his death in 1804. His eldest son, Admiral Sir Robert Lawrie, died in 1848 without children, and the Lawrie baronetcy expired with him. The present proprietor of Maxwelton, the Rev. Sir Emilius Bayley Laurie, is the great-grandson of the hero of the 'Whistle,' but inherits his baronetcy through his mother, a granddaughter of Sir Robert, who married Mr John E. Bayley, eldest son of Sir John Bayley, Bart. He took the name of Laurie on succeeding to Maxwelton.

Mr John M'Murdo agreed to act as judge on the occasion. The historical associations connected with the whistle would have been sure to excite Burns's interest; such a frolic as was proposed took his fancy. He expressed his delight in a letter which he wrote that day on a trivial piece of business:

TO CAPTAIN RIDDEL.

ELLISLAND, *Oct.* 16, 1789.*

SIR—Big with the idea of this important day at Friars Carse, I have watched the elements and skies, in the full persuasion that they would announce it to the astonished world by some phenomena of terrific portent. Yesternight, until a very late hour, did I wait with anxious horror for the appearance of some Comet firing half the sky, or aërial armies of sanguinary Scandinavians darting athwart the startled heavens, rapid as the ragged lightning and horrid as those convulsions of nature that bury nations.

The elements, however, seem to take the matter very quietly: they did not even usher in this morning with triple suns and a shower of blood, symbolical of the three potent heroes, and the mighty claret-shed of the

* Burns, in his notes on Scottish song, gives 'Friday, 16th October 1790,' as the date of the Whistle-contest. The year is certainly wrong. It will be admitted that he is less likely to have made a mistake in dating a letter than in making a statement at the distance of a few years. Besides, his date, 'Friday, 16th October 1790,' carries error on its own face, for the 16th of October 1790 was not a Friday, though the 16th of October 1789 was. Robert Ainslie wrote a letter to Mrs M'Lehose, dated Dumfries, 18th October 1790, in which he tells of having been for several days with Burns at Ellisland, but says nothing of a whistle-contest on the 16th. This view of the date is fully confirmed by the original note of the bet which was first published by Mr Thomas H. Cromek in *Notes and Queries*, December 1, 1860, and which is now (1896) in the possession of Sir Robert Jardine of Castlemilk:

'The original Bett between Sir Robert Laurie and Craigdarroch, for the noted Whistle, which is so much celebrated by Robert Burns's Poems—in which Bett I was named Judge—1789.

'The Bett decided at Carse—16th Oct. 1789.

'Won by Craigdarroch—he drank upds. of 5 Bottles of Claret.

'MEMORANDUM FOR THE WHISTLE.

'The Whistle gained by Sir Robert Laurie (now) in possession of Mr Riddell of Glenriddell, is to be ascertained to the heirs of the said Sir Robert now existing, being Sir R. L., Mr R. of G., and Mr F. of C.—to be settled under the arbitration of Mr Jn. M'Murdo: the business to be decided at Carse, the 16th of October 1789.

(Signed) 'ALEX. FERGUSON.
'R. LAURIE.
'ROBT. RIDDELL.

'COWHILL, 10*th October* 1789.
'Jno. M'Murdo accepts as Judge
'Geo. Johnston *witness*, to be present—
'Patrick Miller *witness*, to be pre. if possible.
—*Minute of Bett between Sir Robert Laurie and Craigdarroch*, 1789.'

day. For me, as Thomson, in his 'Winter,' says of the storm—I shall 'Hear astonished, and astonished sing.'

The whistle and the man; I sing
The man that won the whistle, &c.

Here are we met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys I trow are we;
And mony a night we 've merry been,
And mony mae we hope to be! more

Wha first shall rise to gang awa,
A cuckold coward loon is he:
Wha *last* beside his chair shall fa'
He is the king amang us three.

To leave the heights of Parnassus and come to the humble vale of prose. I have some misgivings that I take too much upon me, when I request you to get your guest, Sir Robert Lawrie, to frank the two enclosed covers for me, the one of them to Sir William Cunningham, of Robertland, Bart., at Auchenskeith, Kilmarnock—the other to Mr Allan Masterton, Writing-Master, Edinburgh. The first has a kindred claim on Sir Robert, as being a brother Baronet and likewise a keen Foxite; the other is one of the worthiest men in the world, and a man of real genius; so, allow me to say, he has a fraternal claim on you. I want them franked for to-morrow, as I cannot get them to the post to-night. I shall send a servant again for them in the evening. Wishing that your head may be crowned with laurels to-night, and free from aches to-morrow, I have the honor to be, Sir, Your deeply indebted humble Servant, R. B.

It would seem that, after this letter had been received by Glenriddel, a note was sent to Burns, inviting him to join the party at Carse. He immediately replied in characteristic fashion:

The king's poor blackguard slave am I,
And scarce dow spare a minute;
But I 'll be with you by and bye,
Or else the devil 's in it!

R. B.*

* The original, which was found in Craigdarroch House, purports to have been endorsed: 'Wrote by Mr Burns, October 1789, upon a card being sent to him to come to Glenriddel's, at Carse, to drink a cheerful glass with Sir Robert Lawrie, Mr Alexander Fergusson, and Glenriddel, upon the meeting of drinking for the Dane's whistle, and gained by Alexander Fergusson.'

Mr W. Scott Douglas, who did not believe in what he terms the 'real presence' of Burns at the 'Whistle' contest, questions the authenticity of the note purporting to have

He was probably present, if not at the dinner, at the symposium which followed, although he makes no express statement to this effect. This is his chronicle of the affair:

I sing of a Whistle, a Whistle of worth,
I sing of a Whistle, the pride of the North,
Was brought to the court of our good Scottish King,
And long with this Whistle all Scotland shall ring.

Old Loda,* still rueing the arm of Fingal,
The god of the bottle sends down from his hall—
'This Whistle 's your challenge, to Scotland get o'er,
And drink them to Hell, Sir! or ne'er see me more!'

Old poets have sung and old chronicles tell
What champions ventur'd, what champions fell:
The son of great Loda was conqueror still,
And blew on the Whistle their requiem shrill.

Till Robert, the lord of the Cairn and the Scaur,†
Unmatch'd at the bottle, unconquer'd in war,
He drank his poor god-ship as deep as the sea;
No tide of the Baltic e'er drunker than he.

Thus Robert, victorious, the trophy has gain'd;
Which now in his house has for ages remain'd;
Till three noble chieftains, and all of his blood,
The jovial contest again have renew'd.

Three joyous good fellows, with hearts clear of flaw:
Craigdarroch, so famous for wit, worth, and law;
And trusty Glenriddel, so skill'd in old coins;
And gallant Sir Robert, deep-read in old wines.

been found at Craigdarroch, but he assigns no positive reason for his scepticism. Referring to Burns's versicle accepting the invitation to be present at the symposium, he says (Library Edition of the *Works of Robert Burns*, vol. ii., p. 267), alluding to the Poet's description of himself as an exciseman—'the king's poor blackguard slave'—'Burns had not commenced his Excise duties at that date.' Here Mr Scott Douglas is in error. It is possible that Burns used this versicle, with variations, on more occasions than one. It was first published in 1801, the first line running, 'The king's most humble servant, I.' Cromek says of it: 'The above answer to an invitation was written extempore on a leaf torn from his Excise book.'

* See Ossian's Caric-thura.—*B.*

† The Cairn, a stream in Glencairn parish, on which Maxwelton House is situated; the Skarr, a similar mountain-rill, in the parish of Penpont; both are affluents of the Nith.

Craigdarroch began, with a tongue smooth as oil,
Desiring Glenriddel to yield up the spoil;
Or else he would muster the heads of the clan,
And once more, in claret, try which was the man.

'By the gods of the ancients!' Glenriddel replies,
'Before I surrender so glorious a prize
I'll conjure the ghost of the great Rorie More,*
And bumper his horn with him twenty times o'er.'

Sir Robert, a soldier, no speech would pretend,
But he ne'er turn'd his back on his foe or his friend;
Said—'Toss down the Whistle, the prize of the field,'
And, knee-deep in claret, he 'd die ere he 'd yield.

To the board of Glenriddel our heroes repair,
So noted for drowning of sorrow and care;
But for wine and for welcome not more known to fame
Than the sense, wit and taste, of a sweet lovely dame.

A bard was selected to witness the fray,
And tell future ages the feats of the day;
A bard who detested all sadness and spleen,
And wish'd that Parnassus a vineyard had been.

The dinner being over, the claret they ply,
And ev'ry new cork is a new spring of joy;
In the bands of old friendship and kindred so set,
And the bands grew the tighter the more they were wet.

Gay Pleasure ran riot as bumpers ran o'er;
Bright Phœbus ne'er witness'd so joyous a core, company
And vow'd that to leave them he was quite forlorn,
Till Cynthia hinted he 'd see them next morn.

Six bottles a-piece had well wore out the night,
When gallant Sir Robert, to finish the fight,
Turn'd o'er in one bumper a bottle of red,
And swore 'twas the way that their ancestors did.

* See Johnson's *Tour to the Hebrides.*—*B.*

Then worthy Glenriddel, so cautious and sage,
No longer the warfare ungodly would wage:
A high Ruling Elder to wallow in wine!*
He left the foul business to folks less divine.

The gallant Sir Robert fought hard to the end;
But who can with Fate and quart bumpers contend?
Though Fate said, a hero shall perish in light;
So uprose bright Phœbus—and down fell the knight.

Next uprose our Bard, like a prophet in drink:—
'Craigdarroch, thou'lt soar when creation shall sink!
But if thou would flourish immortal in rhyme,
Come—one bottle more—and have at the sublime!

'Thy line, that have struggled for freedom with Bruce,
Shall heroes and patriots ever produce:
So thine be the laurel and mine be the bay;
The field thou hast won, by yon bright God of Day!'

PRESENTATION STANZA:

But one sorry quill—and that worne to the core;
No paper—but such as I shew it;
But such as it is, will the good Laird of Torr
Accept—and excuse the poor Poet?

The whistle is now (1896) in the possession of Mr R. Cutlar Fergusson, the present proprietor of Craigdarroch.†

* Glenriddel, who was a ruling-elder—all the lay elders are ruling elders—represented the Presbytery of Dumfries in the Assembly from 1789 till 1793.

† The following statement was made in 1851, by William Hunter of Cockrune, in the parish of Closeburn, who at the time of the drinking contest was a servant at Friars' Carse: 'Burns,' he said, 'was present the whole evening. He was invited to attend the party, to see that the gentlemen drank fair, and to commemorate the day by writing a song. I recollect well that when the dinner was over, Burns quitted the table, and went to a table in the same room that was placed in a window that looked south-east: and there he sat down for the night. I placed before him a bottle of rum and another of brandy, which he did not finish, but left a good deal of each when he rose from the table after the gentlemen had gone to bed. . . . When the gentlemen were put to bed, Burns walked home without any assistance, not being the worse of drink. When Burns was sitting at the table in the window, he had pen, ink, and paper, which I brought to him at his own request. He now and then wrote on the paper, and while the gentlemen were

The poet was exceptionally liberal with copies of 'The Whistle.' Even the Duke of Queensberry received one. A letter accompanied it:

TO THE DUKE OF QUEENSBERRY.

My Lord Duke—Will your Grace pardon this approach in a poor Poet, who perhaps intrudes on your converse with Princes, to present you—all he has to offer—his best ballad, and to beg of you—all he has to ask—your gracious acceptance of it? Whatever might be my opinion of the merits of the poem, I would not have dared to take the liberty of presenting it thus, but for your Grace's acquaintance with the Dramatis Personæ of the piece.

When I first thought of sending my poem to your Grace, I had some misgivings of heart about it—something within me seemed to say:—'A nobleman of the first rank and the first taste, and who has lived in the first Court of Europe, what will he care for either you or your ballad? Depend upon it that he will look on this business as some one or other of the many modifications of that servility of soul with which authors, and particularly you poets, have ever approached the Great.'

No! said I to himself, I am conscious of the purity of my motives; and as I never crouch to any man but the man I have wronged, not even him unless he forgives me, I will approach his Grace with tolerable upright confidence, that were I and my ballad poorer stuff than we are, the Duke of Queensberry's polite affability would make me welcome, as my sole motive is to show him how sincerely I have the honor to be, My Lord Duke, Your Grace's most obedient, humble servant,

Robt. Burns.

sober, he turned round often and chatted with them, but drank none of the claret which they were drinking. . . . I heard him read aloud several parts of the poem, much to the amusement of the three gentlemen.' Doubts have been cast upon the accuracy of Hunter's statement, and it is by no means improbable that after the lapse of many years his memory may have played him false, especially in regard to the object of Burns's presence on the evening. His statement is now of interest chiefly as an indication of Burns's reputation for sobriety—at all events as sobriety was understood in these days. All his Ellisland servants without exception gave the same testimony. Thus Elizabeth Smith, who was in his service in 1788-89, testified that she saw her master only once affected with liquor—at the New Year. In this connection, also, the following may be quoted from Mrs Burns's reminiscences. 'Mrs B. remembers the circumstances about the Whistle—that, as she heard them related, the Bard, tho' present at the contest, came home in his ordinary trim. Tho' he drank, perhaps, like some others, he was not required to keep pace with the champions. The song was composed soon after the drinking bout; and Captain Riddel frequently called to see how he was coming on with it'—'that is,' writes Dr Hately Waddell, 'with the finished copy.' The statement of Miss Isabella Begg to Dr Robert Chambers on this subject was as follows: My grandmother was at Ellisland when the 'Whistle' was contended for. In his letter of 14th August 1789 to his brother William the poet mentions his mother; in another, 10th November same year, he says: 'My mother is returned, now that she has seen my boy, Francis Wallace, fairly set to the world.' Now my mother (Mrs Begg) always said her mother said that Robert was at the dinner, and that he returned quite sober from the contest.

It was now three years, so far as can now be ascertained, since the grave had closed over Mary Campbell, in October 1786. The poet had in the interval married and settled in life, and taken up a new and laborious profession. Just about this time, as will be found, he expressed his sense of the importance of being a good husband and father, saying that there lay 'the true pathos and sublime of human life.' Yet a day came at the end of harvest, when Mary's death was recalled to him with intense and affecting vividness. According to Lockhart, who reported a statement made by Jean Burns to her friend John M'Diarmid, 'he spent that day, though labouring under cold, in the usual work of the harvest, and apparently in excellent spirits. But as the twilight deepened, he appeared to grow "very sad about something," and at length wandered out into the barn-yard, to which his wife, in her anxiety, followed him, entreating him in vain to observe that frost had set in, and to return to the fireside. On being again and again requested to do so, he promised compliance; but still remained where he was, striding up and down slowly, and contemplating the sky, which was singularly clear and starry. At last Mrs Burns found him stretched on a mass of straw, with his eyes fixed on a beautiful planet "that shone like another moon," and prevailed on him to come in. He immediately, on entering the house, called for his desk, and wrote exactly as they now stand, with all the ease of one copying from memory, these sublime and pathetic verses:'

TO MARY IN HEAVEN.

TUNE—*Captain Cook's Death, &c.*

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed Shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy Lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

That sacred hour can I forget:
Can I forget the hallow'd grove
Where, by the winding Ayr, we met
To live one day of parting love!
Eternity can not efface
Those records dear of transports past;
Thy image at our last embrace,
Ah, little thought we 'twas our last.

Ayr, gurgling, kiss'd his pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wild-woods, thickening green;
The fragrant birch and hawthorn hoar
Twin'd amorous round the raptur'd scene;
The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,
The birds sang love on every spray,
Till too, too soon the glowing west
Proclaim'd the speed of wingèd day.

Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes
And fondly broods with miser-care;
Time but th' impression stronger * makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear:
My Mary, dear departed Shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy Lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

Burns had written a letter about the late changes in his circumstances to his venerable friend Blacklock, and entrusted it to Robert Heron,† a young minister and literary aspirant, whose enthusiasm for Burns has already been noted. Heron had proved a faithless messenger, and Blacklock addressed Burns as follows:

* Variation—'deeper.'

† Robert Heron, son of a weaver, born at New Galloway, 1764. Passed through the University of Edinburgh, supporting himself by writing for booksellers. His works comprise a *History of Scotland*, *Journey through the Western Counties of Scotland*, *Life of Burns* (the first life published). He was imprisoned for debt in Newgate, where he died (of fever), 1807. See Vol. I., p. 388.

TO MR ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 24*th August* 1789.

DEAR BURNS, thou brother of my heart,
Both for thy virtues and thy art;
If art it may be called in thee,
Which Nature's bounty large and free
With pleasure in thy breast diffuses,
And warms thy soul with all the Muses.
Whether to laugh with easy grace
Thy numbers move the sage's face,
Or bid the softer passions rise,
And ruthless souls with grief surprise,
'Tis Nature's voice distinctly felt,
Through thee, her organ, thus to melt.

Most anxiously I wish to know,
With thee of late how matters go:
How keeps thy much-loved Jean her health?
What promises thy farm of wealth?
Whether the Muse persists to smile,
And all thy anxious cares beguile?
Whether bright fancy keeps alive?
And how thy darling infants thrive?

For me, with grief and sickness spent,
Since I my homeward journey bent,
Spirits depressed no more I mourn,
But vigour, life, and health return.
No more to gloomy thoughts a prey,
I sleep all night and live all day;
By turns my friend and book enjoy,
And thus my circling hours employ;
Happy while yet these hours remain,
If Burns could join the cheerful train,
With wonted zeal, sincere and fervent,
Salute once more his humble servant,

THOMAS BLACKLOCK.

Burns replied in rhyme :

TO DR BLACKLOCK.

ELLISLAND, 21*st Oct.* 1789.

Wow, but your letter made me vauntie ! elated
And are ye hale, and weel, and cantie ? in good health—merry
I ken'd it still your wee bit jauntie jaunt
Wad bring ye to :
Lord send you ay as weel 's I want ye,
And then ye 'll do !

The ill-thief blaw the Heron south ! devil
And never drink be near his drouth ! thirst
He tauld mysel, by word o' mouth,
He 'd tak my letter ;
I lippen'd to the chiel in trouth, trusted—fellow
And bade nae better. desired

But, aiblins, honest Master Heron perhaps
Had, at the time, some dainty fair one
To ware his theologic care on spend
And holy study ;
And tired o' sauls to waste his lear on, learning
E'en tried the body.

But what d 'ye think, my trusty fier ? friend
I 'm turn'd a gauger—Peace be here !
Parnassian queens, I fear, I fear
Ye 'll now disdain me,
And then my fifty pounds a year
Will little gain me !

Ye glaiket, gleesome, dainty damies giddy
Wha, by Castalia's wimplin' streamies, winding
Lowp, sing, and lave your pretty limbies, jump
Ye ken, ye ken know
That strang necessity supreme is
'Mang sons o' men.

I hae a wife and twa wee laddies—
They maun hae brose and brats o' duddies: hasty pudding—suits of clothes
Ye ken yoursels my heart right proud is—
I need na vaunt—
But I 'll sned besoms—thraw saugh woodies, cut—twist—willow withes
Before they want.

Lord help me thro' this warld o' care!
I 'm weary sick o 't late and air! early
Not but I hae a richer share
Than mony ithers;
But why should ae man better fare,
And a' men brithers?

Come, Firm Resolve, take thou the van,
Thou stalk o' carl-hemp * in man!
And let us mind faint heart ne'er wan won
A lady fair:
Wha does the utmost that he can,
Will whyles do mair. sometimes—more

But to conclude my silly rhyme
(I 'm scant o' verse and scant o' time),
To make a happy fire-side clime
To weans and wife— children
That 's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.

My compliments to sister Beckie;
And eke the same to honest Lucky:
I wat she is a daintie chuckie †
As e'er tread clay;
And gratefully, my gude auld cockie,
I 'm yours for ay.

ROBERT BURNS.

* Carl-hemp or churl-hemp, the name given (on the erroneous assumption that it was the male plant) to what is really the female plant of hemp, the robuster and coarser of the two. 'You have a stalk of carle hemp in you' is a proverb—'spoken to sturdy and stubborn boys.'—KELLY'S *Scottish Proverbs*.

† Chuckie, a familiar term for a hen, used for a darling, 'a duck.'

Among Captain Riddel's visitors this season was Francis Grose * —an English gentleman, in reduced circumstances, with a taste for antiquarian research. He had produced a large work on the Antiquities of England, a treatise on Arms and Armour, a book on Military Antiquities, and several minor works. The talent and *camaraderie* of the man were scarcely more remarkable than his figure, which was ludicrously squat and obese. Grose having made an excursion to Scotland for the purpose of sketching and chronicling its antiquities, Burns met him at Friars' Carse, and was greatly amused by his appearance and conversation, † which inspired the following :

ON CAPTAIN GROSE'S PEREGRINATIONS THRO' SCOTLAND,

COLLECTING THE ANTIQUITIES OF THAT KINGDOM.

Hear, Land o' Cakes, and brither Scots
Frae Maidenkirk ‡ to Johnny Groat's—
If there 's a hole in a' your coats,
I rede you tent it : warn—attend to it
A chield 's amang you takin' notes, fellow
And faith he 'll prent it :

If in your bounds ye chance to light
Upon a fine, fat, fodgel wight, plump
O' stature short but genius bright,
That 's he, mark weel—
And wow ! he has an unco sleight uncommon skill
O' cauk and keel. chalk(s) and ruddle

* Francis Grose, son of a jeweller who had left Switzerland and settled at Richmond, was born at Greenford, Middlesex, about 1731; studied as an artist, but having spent a fortune left him by his father, he took to writing, chiefly on antiquities. He published *Antiquities of England and Wales* (4 vols. 1773-1787), and when he made the acquaintance of Burns, was engaged in a similar work on Scotland. The latter work was published 1789-91 (2 vols.), and included Burns's 'Tam o' Shanter'—written for it. He subsequently visited Ireland, with a similar purpose, but had only started work at Dublin when he died (1791). He has been described as a sort of antiquarian Falstaff. His other works deal with philological and miscellaneous subjects.

† Mrs Burns describes Grose as one of the funniest, laughing, fat, good-natured men she ever saw. When he called, he took a glass of rum and water; never dined ; 'for they were always gaun to Captain Riddel's to their dinner.' Remembers Burns writing to her (Mrs B.'s) father to draw some antiquities about the west country : but was not present when the bargain was made about Alloway Kirk.'—*Mrs Burns's Reminiscences.*

‡ Maidenkirk is an inversion of the name Kirkmaiden, in Wigtownshire, the most southerly parish in Scotland.

By some auld, houlet-haunted biggin, owl—building
Or kirk deserted by its riggin, roof
It 's ten to ane ye 'll find him snug in
Some eldritch part, eerie
Wi' deils, they say, Lord safe 's ! colleaguin conferring
At some black art.

Ilk ghaist that haunts auld ha' or chamer, Each—hall —chamber
Ye gipsy-gang that deal in glamour, sorcery
And you, deep-read in hell's black grammar,
Warlocks and witches :
Ye 'll quake at his conjúring hammer,
Ye midnight bitches !

It 's tauld he was a sodger bred,
And ane wad rather fa'n than fled ; would have fallen
But now he 's quat the spurtle-blade quitted—sword
And dog-skin wallet,
And taen the—*Antiquarian trade*,
I think they call it.

He has a fouth o' auld nick-nackets : abundance
Rusty airn caps, and jinglin jackets iron—jack-armour
Wad haud the Lothians three in tackets keep—shoe-nails
A towmont gude ; twelvemonth
And parritch-pats and auld saut-backets porridge-pots —salt-boxes
Before the Flood.

Of Eve's first fire he has a cinder ;
Auld Tubalcain's fire-shool and fender ; shovel
That which distinguishèd the gender
O' Balaam's ass ;
A broomstick o' the witch of Endor,
Weel shod wi' brass. mounted

Forbye, he 'll shape you aff fu' gleg Besides—smartly
The cut of Adam's philibeg ; kilt
The knife that nicket Abel's craig cut—throat
He 'll prove you fully

It was a faulding jocteleg,* folding clasp-knife
Or lang-kail gullie. knife for cutting greens

But wad ye see him in his glee
(For meikle glee and fun has he) much
Then set him down, and twa or three
Gude fellows wi' him;
And *port*, O *port!* shine thou a wee, for a short time
And then ye 'll see him!

Now, by the Pow'rs o' verse and prose!
Thou art a dainty chield, O Grose!— fine fellow
Whae'er o' thee shall ill suppose,
They sair misca' thee; badly slander
I 'd take the rascal by the nose,
Wad say 'Shame fa' thee.' befall

This acquaintanceship also provoked an

EPIGRAM ON CAPTAIN GROSE.

The Devil got notice that Grose was a-dying,
So whip! at the summons, old Satan came flying;
But when he approach'd where poor Francis lay moaning,
And saw each bed-post with its burthen a-groaning,
Astonish'd, confounded, cry'd Satan 'By G—d,
I 'll want 'im, ere take such a damnable load!'

Afterwards, when Grose had proceeded on his mission, Burns kept up a correspondence with him. Dugald Stewart having intimated a desire to see the antiquary, Burns sent the following letter to his friend:

TO FRANCIS GROSE, ESQ., F.A.S.

Sir—I believe among all our Scots literati you have not met with Professor Dugald Stewart, who fills the moral philosophy chair in the University of Edinburgh. To say that he is a man of the first parts, and,

* The etymology of this word is doubtful. It used to be derived from *Jacques de Liège*, assumed to be the name of the maker. But the word is doubtless akin to the English *jackalegs*, *jacklag-knife*, and *jack-knife*.

what is more, a man of the first worth, to a gentleman of your general acquaintance, and who so much enjoys the luxury of unencumbered freedom and undisturbed privacy, is not perhaps recommendation enough :—but when I inform you that Mr Stewart's principal characteristic is your favourite feature—*that* sterling independence of mind which, though every man's right, so few men have the courage to claim and fewer still the magnanimity to support:—When I tell you that, unseduced by splendor and undisgusted by wretchedness, he appreciates the merits of the various actors in the great drama of life, merely as they perform their parts—in short, he is a man after your own heart, and I comply with his earnest request in letting you know that he wishes above all things to meet with you. His house, Catrine, is within less than a mile of Sorn Castle, which you proposed visiting; or if you could transmit him the enclosed, he would, with the greatest pleasure, meet you any where in the neighbourhood. I write to Ayrshire, to inform Mr Stewart that I have acquitted myself of my promise. Should your time and spirits permit your meeting with Mr Stewart, 'tis well; if not, I hope you will forgive this liberty, and I have at least an opportunity of assuring you with what truth and respect, I am, Sir, Your great admirer, And very humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

TO PROFESSOR DUGALD STEWART, EDINBURGH.

(PER FAVOR OF CAPTAIN GROSE.)

SIR—I will be extremely happy if this letter shall have the honor of introducing you to Captain Grose, a gentleman whose acquaintance you told me you so much coveted. I inclose this to him, and should his pursuits lead him again to Ayrshire, and should his time and (what I am sorry to say is more precarious) his health permit, I have no doubt but you will have the mutual pleasure of being acquainted.—I am, &c., R. B.

Not being, after all, very sure of the whereabouts of Grose, Burns enclosed his letter in an envelope addressed to Adam de Cardonnel,* a brother antiquary resident in Edinburgh, along with a set of jocular verses in imitation of the song given by Herd in the *Miscellany* (vol. ii., p. 99) under the title of 'Sir John Malcolm.'†

* Adam de Cardonnel, afterwards Cardonnel-Lawson, had studied for the medical profession, but retired to indulge his love of antiquities and numismatics. He made the acquaintance of Grose when the latter was in Scotland (1789), and assisted him in his investigations. He soon after quitted Scotland and went to reside in Northumberland. He died at Bath in 1820. His chief work is *Numismata Scotiæ* (Edinburgh, 1786, 4to).

† Dr Charles Rogers (*Social Scotland*, vol. ii., pp. 413-418, 1884) traced this once mysterious doggerel to the pen of Colonel Alexander Monypenny of Pitmilly, laureate of the convivial club known as the 'Beggar's Benison,' whose headquarters were at

VERSES ON CAPTAIN GROSE.

Ken ye aught o' Captain Grose?
Igo and ago,
If he 's amang his friends or foes?
Iram, coram, dago.

Is he to Abra'm's bosom gane?
Igo and ago,
Or haudin Sarah by the wame?
Iram, coram, dago.

Is he South or is he North?
Igo and ago,
Or drownèd in the river Forth?
Iram, coram, dago.

Is he slain by Hielan' bodies?
Igo and ago,
And eaten like a wether-haggis? sheep's haggis
Iram, coram, dago.

Where'er he be, the Lord be near him!
Igo and ago,
As for the deil, he daur na steer him, dare not disturb
Iram, coram, dago.

Anstruther. Dr Rogers reprints a corrected version of the squib, which satirises the somewhat eccentric baronet, Sir John Malcolm, a proprietor in that neighbourhood, who died before 1747; 'Clerk Dischington,' namely, George Dischington, town-clerk of Crail from 1708 onwards; and 'Sandy Don,' the well-known schoolmaster of Crail at the same date. According to Dr Rogers, the first verse of the fragment is:

O were you e'er in Crail toun?
Igo and ago;

and the third:

Ken ye ought o' Sir John Malcolm?
Igo and ago;
If he 's a wise man, I mistak him,
Iram, coram, dago.

Colonel Monypenny died in extreme old age in December 1801. Dr Charles Mackay, in his *Dictionary of Lowland Scotch*, 1888, says (p. 96) that 'Igo and ago, iram, coram, dago,' is the chorus of an old Gaelic boat-song. But the accuracy of this guess is gravely doubted, even by Gaelic scholars.

But please transmit th' inclosèd letter,
Igo and ago,
Which will oblige your humble debtor,
Iram, coram, dago.

So may ye hae auld stanes in store,
Igo and ago,
The very stanes that Adam bore,
Iram, coram, dago.

So may ye get in glad possession,
Igo and ago,
The coins o' Satan's coronation!
Iram, coram, dago.

The work of the Excise might have been good for Burns if it had merely filled up his spare time. Daily riding through the beautiful scenery of Nithsdale could not but be congenial to a poet who had always been accustomed to compose his poems in the open air and in the middle of his labours. Unfortunately, however, the work was too hard and exacting. The ten parishes which Burns surveyed form a district not less than fifteen miles long and fifteen miles broad. He had to ride about two hundred miles a week. Neither poetry nor the farm received fair-play. The poet, however, was diligent and exact in the performance of his official duty. Viewing the contraband-trade as an infraction on the rights of the fair trader, he was disposed to be severe with the regular smuggler; but in dealing with the shortcomings of country brewers and retailers, he tempered justice with mercy. Professor Gillespie of St Andrews remembered seeing Burns on a fair-day in August 1793, at the village of Thornhill, where, as was not uncommon in those days, a poor woman named Kate Watson had, for one day, taken up the trade of a publican, of course without a licence. 'I saw the poet enter her door, and anticipated nothing short of an immediate seizure of a certain greybeard and barrel which, to my personal knowledge, contained the contraband commodities our bard was in quest of. A nod, accompanied by a significant movement of the forefinger, brought Kate to the doorway or trance, and I was near

enough to hear the following words distinctly uttered: "Kate, are you mad? Don't you know that the supervisor and I will be in upon you in the course of forty minutes? Good-by t' ye at present." Burns was in the street and in the midst of the crowd in an instant, and I had access to know that the friendly hint was not neglected. It saved a poor widow from a fine of several pounds, for committing a quarterly offence by which the revenue was probably subject to an annual loss of five shillings.' *

Allan Cunningham relates a similar anecdote. 'The poet and a brother exciseman one day suddenly entered a widow woman's shop in Dunscore, and made a seizure of smuggled tobacco. "Jenny," said the poet, "I expected this would be the upshot. Here, Lewars, take note of the number of rolls as I count them. Now, Jock, did ye ever hear an auld wife numbering her threads before check-reels were invented? Thou 's ane, and thou 's no ane, and thou 's ane a' out—listen." As he handed out the rolls, he went on with his humorous enumeration, but dropping every other roll into Janet's lap. Lewars took the desired note with much gravity, and saw as if he saw not the merciful conduct of his companion.'

A brief, hurried note which Burns wrote this month to Mr. Alexander Fergusson of Craigdarroch † evidently refers to some similar Excise case, in which the poet's sympathy was enlisted by the delinquent:

GLOBE INN, *Noon, Wednesday.*

Blessèd be he that kindly doth
The poor man's case consider. ‡

I have sought you all over the town, good Sir, to learn what you have done, or what can be done, for poor Robie Gordon. The hour is at hand when I must assume the execrable office of whipper-in to the blood-hounds of justice, and must, must let loose the ravenous rage of the carrion sons of b–tches on poor Robie. I think you can do something to save the unfortunate man, and am sure, if you can, you will. I know that Benevolence is supreme in your bosom and has the first voice in, and last check on, all you do; but that insidious whore, Politics,

* *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, 1829.

† Alexander Fergusson, a distinguished lawyer, born about 1746; married Deborah, daughter of Robert Cutlar, merchant in Dumfries (through her he inherited the lands of Arroland in Kirkcudbrightshire); died 1796. His eldest son, Robert Cutlar Fergusson, was also a distinguished lawyer, and became Attorney-general of India.

‡ Psalm xli. 1. Burns has altered 'wisely' to 'kindly.'

may seduce the honest cully Attention, until the practicable moment of doing good is no more. I have the honor to be, Sir, your obliged, humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.*

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

ELLISLAND, *Nov.* 1, 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I had written you long ere now, could I have guessed where to find you, for I am sure you have more good sense than to waste the precious days of vacation-time in the dirt of business in Edinburgh. Wherever you are, God bless you and lead you not into temptation, but deliver you from evil!

I do not know if I have informed you that I am now appointed to an excise division, in the middle of which my house and farm lie. In this I was extremely lucky. Without ever having been an expectant, as they call their journeymen excisemen, I was directly planted down to all intents and purposes an officer of excise, there to flourish and bring forth fruits—worthy of repentance.

I know not how the word 'exciseman,' or still more opprobrious 'gauger,' will sound in your ears. I, too, have seen the day when my auditory nerves would have felt very delicately on this subject; but a wife and children are things which have a wonderful power in blunting these kind of sensations. Fifty pounds a year for life, and a provision for widows and orphans, you will allow is no bad settlement for a *poet*. For the ignominy of the profession, I have the encouragement which I once heard a recruiting-serjeant give to a numerous, if not a respectable, audience, in the streets of Kilmarnock—'Gentlemen, for your further and better encouragement, I can assure you that our regiment is the most blackguard corps under the crown, and, consequently, with us an honest fellow has the surest chance for preferment.'

You need not doubt that I find several very unpleasant and disagreeable circumstances in my business; but I am tired with and disgusted at the language of complaint against the evils of life. Human existence in the most favorable situations does not abound with pleasures and

* 'Jean Dunn, a suspected trader in Kirkpatrick-Durham, observing Burns and Robertson—another exciseman—approaching her house on the morning of a fair, slipped out by the back-door, apparently to evade their scrutiny, leaving in her house only her attendant for the day and her daughter, a little girl. "Has there been any brewing for the fair here to-day?" demanded the poet as he entered the cabin. "O no, sir," was the reply of the servant; "we hae nae licence for that." "That's no true," exclaimed the child: "the muckle black kist is fou' o' the bottles o' yill that my mother sat up a' night brewing for the fair." "Does that bird speak?" said Robertson, pointing to one hanging in a cage. "There is no use for another speaking-bird in this house," said Burns, "while that little lassie is to the fore. We are in a hurry just now; but as we return from the fair, we'll examine the muckle black kist." Of course, when they returned, the kist belied the little lassie's tale.'—*Communicated by Mr Joseph Train.* The original of this note—endorsed 'October 1789'—was found in Craigdarroch House.

has its inconveniences and ills; capricious, foolish man mistakes these inconveniences and ills, as if they were the peculiar property of his particular situation; and hence that eternal fickleness, that love of change, which has ruined, and daily does ruin, many a fine fellow, as well as many a blockhead; and is almost, without exception, a constant source of disappointment and misery. So far from being dissatisfied with my present lot, I earnestly pray the Great Disposer of events that it may never be worse, and I think I can lay my hand on my heart and say 'I shall be content.'

I long to hear from you how you go on—not so much in business as in life. Are you pretty well satisfied with your own exertions and tolerably at ease in your internal reflections? 'Tis much to be a great character as a lawyer, but beyond comparison more to be a great character as a man. That you *may* be both the one and the other is the earnest wish, and that you *will* be both is the firm persuasion, of, My dear Sir, &c., R. B.

TO MR RICHARD BROWN.

ELLISLAND, *4th November* 1789.

I have been so hurried, my ever-dear friend, that though I got both your letters, I have not been able to command an hour to answer them as I wished; and even now, you are to look on this as merely confessing debt and craving days. Few things could have given me so much pleasure as the news that you were once more safe and sound on *terra firma* and happy in that place where happiness is alone to be found—in the fireside circle. May the benevolent Director of all things peculiarly bless you in all those endearing connexions consequent on the tender and venerable names of husband and father! I have indeed been extremely lucky in getting an additional income of £50 a year, while, at the same time, the appointment will not cost me above £10 or £12 per annum of expenses more than I must have inevitably incurred. The worst circumstance is that the Excise division which I have got is so extensive—no less than ten parishes to ride over; and it abounds besides with so much business that I can scarcely steal a spare moment. However, labor endears rest, and both together are absolutely necessary for the proper enjoyment of human existence. I cannot meet you any where. No less than an order from the Board of Excise, at Edinburgh, is necessary before I can have so much time as to meet you in Ayrshire. But do you come and see me. We must have a social day, and perhaps lengthen it out half the night, before you go again to sea. You are the earliest friend I now have on earth, my brothers excepted: and is not that an endearing circumstance? When you and I first met, we were at the green period of human life. The twig would easily take a bent, but would as easily return to its former state. You and I not only took a mutual bent, but, by the melancholy, though strong, influence of

being both of the family of the unfortunate, we were entwined with one another in our growth towards advanced age; and blasted be the sacrilegious hand that shall attempt to undo the union! You and I must have one bumper to my favourite toast: 'May the companions of our youth be the friends of our old age!' Come and see me one year; I shall see you at Port Glasgow the next; and if we can contrive to have a gossipping between our two bedfellows, it will be so much additional pleasure. Mrs Burns joins me in kind compliments to you and Mrs Brown.

Adieu! I am ever, my dear Sir, yours, R. B.

TO MR WILLIAM BURNS, MORPETH.

ELLISLAND, 10*th Nov.* 1789.

DEAR WILLIAM—I would have written you sooner, but I am so hurried and fatigued with my Excise business that I can scarcely pluck up resolution to go through the effort of a letter to anybody. Indeed you hardly deserve a letter from me, considering that you have spare hours in which you have nothing to do at all, and yet it was near three months between your two last letters.

I know not if you heard lately from Gilbert. I expect him here with me about the latter end of this week. * * * * My mother is returned, now that she has seen my little boy Francis fairly set to the world. I suppose Gilbert has informed you that you have got a new nephew. He is a fine thriving fellow and promises to do honour to the name he bears. I have named him Francis Wallace, after my worthy friend, Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop.

The only Ayrshire news that I remember in which I think you will be interested is that Mr Ronald is bankrupt.* You will easily guess that from his insolent vanity in his sunshine of life he will now feel a little retaliation from those who thought themselves eclipsed by him; for, poor fellow, I do not think he ever intentionally injured any one. I might, indeed, perhaps, except his wife, whom he certainly has used very ill; but she is still fond of him to distraction, and bears up wonderfully—much superior to him—under this severe shock of fortune. Women have a kind of sturdy sufferance which qualifies them to endure beyond, much beyond, the common run of men; but perhaps part of that fortitude is owing to their short-sightedness, for they are by no means famous for seeing remote consequences in all their real importance.

* Oct. 23, 1789. Sequestration. Mr Wm. Ronald, tobacconist, Mauchline. See in this connection Vol. I., p. 61. 'There is a stone in the Monkton churchyard which should be of interest to the admirers of Burns. It is that erected to the memory of Matthew Paterson, farmer at Aitkenbrae, and his wife, Anne Ronald. . . . She died in 1828, aged 61. Matthew Paterson can be no other than that great friend of the poet who, as he himself tells us, was admitted a member of the famous Tarbolton Bachelors' Club in 1782.'—*A Little Scottish World*, by Rev. Kirkwood Hewat, M.A.

I am very glad at your resolution to live within your income, be that what it will. Had poor Ronald done so, he had not this day been a prey to the dreadful miseries of insolvency. You are at the time of life when those habitudes are begun which are to mark the character of the future man. Go on and persevere, and depend on less or more success. I am, dear William, your brother, R. B.

Burns's kindness to his young brother has already been alluded to. A letter of William Burns, dated from Morpeth, 29th November 1789, includes an account of moneys and articles of clothing furnished for him by the poet during the preceding eighteen months, to the amount of £5, 9s. In August of this year two guineas had been advanced, which the young man says he intended to repay about Christmas; 'but,' he adds, 'as you can spare them, I will keep them till I go to London, when I expect soon to be able to clear you off in full.' He goes on to express a hope that 'young Wallace bids fair to rival his great predecessor in strength and wisdom.' He apologises for negligence as a correspondent, pleading that he is devoting his leisure time to reading from a circulating library. He has read Kames's *Sketches of the History of Man*, Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides*, Burns's *Poems*, and Beattie's *Dissertations*, and will be glad if his brother will set down the names of a few other books which he should inquire for.

A contest for the representation of the Dumfries Burghs commenced in September between Sir James Johnstone of Westerhall, the previous member, and Captain Miller, younger of Dalswinton, son of Burns's landlord.* In this affair the poet's sympathies were divided. Professing a sentimental Jacobitism, he had latterly taken no decided part with either of the two great factions of his time. Curiously enough, although in Edinburgh he had worn the colours of Fox, he now leaned towards Pitt.† On the other hand, some of his best friends—Henry Erskine, the

* Sir James Johnstone (1726–94) was fourth baronet; had been a lieutenant-colonel in the army; represented Dumfries Burghs, 1784–90, and Weymouth, 1791–94. Patrick Miller, younger of Dalswinton, was elected in 1790 against Sir James Johnstone. He retained the seat until 1796. It was Captain Miller who persuaded Perry of the *Morning Chronicle* to offer Burns a post on his paper (see Vol. IV.). Miller died in 1845.

† On the subject of Burns's politics Sir Walter Scott remarks in sending some of the poet's letters to Lockhart: 'In one of them to that singular old curmudgeon, Lady Winifred Constable, you will see he plays high Jacobite, and on that account it is curious; though I imagine his Jacobitism, like my own, belonged to the fancy rather than the reason. He was, however, a great Pittite down to a certain period. There were some

Earl of Glencairn, Mr Miller, Captain Riddel—were Whigs, and he would naturally wish not to offend them. The Revolution had already commenced in France; Lafayette brought Louis and his wife and children through the mob from Versailles to Paris only a fortnight before Burns was apostrophising the shade of Mary in the barnyard at Ellisland. But it was local feeling rather than partisanship that drew him into the fight in the burghs. He detested the Duke of Queensberry,* the greatest landlord in Nithsdale, who was held to have all but played traitor to the king on the occasion of the Regency Bill, when he voted with the minority for the surrender of the power of the crown into the hands of the Prince of Wales without restriction. For this, and for his mean personal character and heartless debaucheries, Burns held him in extreme contempt. In the first place, then, he penned an election ballad, chiefly aimed at the Duke.

ELECTION BALLAD FOR WESTERHA'.

TUNE—'*Up and waur them a.*'

The Laddies by the banks o' Nith
Wad trust his Grace wi' a', Jamie;
But he 'll sair them as he sair'd the king— served
Turn tail and rin awa, Jamie.

Chor.—Up and waur them a', Jamie,† baffle
Up and waur them a';
The Johnstones hae the guidin o't,‡
Ye turncoat Whigs, awa!

passing stupid verses in the papers, attacking and defending his satire on a certain preacher whom he termed "an unco calf." In one of them occurred these lines in vituperation of the adversary:

"A Whig, I guess. But Rab 's a Tory,
And gies us monie a funny story."

This was in 1787.'

* William, third Earl of March (born 1725), succeeded his cousin as fourth (and last) Duke of Queensberry in 1778. Almost his whole life he was a patron and supporter of the turf, and was most successful in his speculations. He held the office of lord of the bedchamber to George III. from 1760 till 1789, when he was dismissed because of his supporting the claim of the Prince of Wales. He died 1810, having possessed a peerage for eighty years.—'Old Q. will ever stand conspicuous in the annals of this country as one who reached the height of notoriety without having done more than one single act worthy of a nation's praise. The much-vaunted contributions to the "Patriotic Fund" excepted, nothing remains.'

† 'Up and waur them a', Willie,' is an old Border song.

‡ A Border proverb, significant of the great local power of this family in former times.

The day he stude his country's friend,
  Or gied her faes a claw, Jamie, foes—stroke
Or frae puir man a blessin' wan,
  That day the Duke ne'er saw, Jamie.

But wha is he, his country's boast?
  Like him there is na twa, Jamie;
There 's no a callant tents the kye boy—herds—cows
  But kens o' Westerha', Jamie.

To end the wark, here 's Whistlebirk,*
  Long may his whistle blaw, Jamie;
And Maxwell true, o' sterling blue;
  And we 'll be Johnstones a', Jamie.

Burns may be credited with the authorship of a piece of trenchant writing which appeared in *The Star* of February 22d of the following year. It is almost a prose version of the 'Election Ballad for Westerha':'

Our worthy Member, Sir James Johnstone, is now sure of his election —3 out of the 5 Boroughs he represents being determined to give him that support to which their long experience of his Parliamentary conduct, and honest independence, entitle him.

The agents of his Ducal Opponent, are perfectly on a par with their degraded Master, whom they are a-kin to in every thing but that Nobility which he has so long debased by his apostacy from the best of Kings, in the moment of distress. But the public indignation is now roused, and we are determined no longer to sacrifice our Liberties to such miscreants. The corrupt influence of *the Bank* will then cease to delude, and the perverted office of Magistracy to tyrannize and oppress.

When old Q. was last amongst us, scorn and execration followed wherever he went; and it is a notorious fact, that he was obliged, in more places than one, to collect his vassals to protect him from insult.

It fared otherwise with Sir James. Wherever *he* went, pleasure gladdened every countenance: the child that had but *heard* of the good man's virtues, lisped his praise; and the parent that *knew* them, shed tears of joy!—No harassed tenant dreaded *his* return; and no fond mother had to reproach him with the ruin of a beloved daughter!

* Alexander Birtwhistle, merchant at Kirkcudbright, and provost of the burgh. A contemporary chronicle notices him as carrying on a brisk foreign trade from that little port.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

9th December 1789.

SIR—I have a good while had a wish to trouble you with a letter, and had certainly done it long ere now but for a humiliating something that throws cold water on the resolution, as if one should say: 'You have found Mr Graham a very powerful and kind friend indeed, and that interest he is so kindly taking in your concerns you ought, by everything in your power, to keep alive and cherish.' Now, though, since God has thought proper to make one powerful and another helpless, the connection of obliger and obliged is all fair; and though my being under your patronage is to me highly honourable, yet, sir, allow me to flatter myself, that as a poet and an honest man you first interested yourself in my welfare, and principally as such still you permit me to approach you.

I have found the Excise business go on a great deal smoother with me than I expected, owing a good deal to the generous friendship of Mr Mitchel, my collector, and the kind assistance of Mr Findlater, my supervisor. I dare to be honest, and I fear no labour. Nor do I find my hurried life greatly inimical to my correspondence with the Muses. Their visits to me, indeed, and I believe to most of their acquaintance, like the visits of good angels, are short and far between; but I meet them now and then as I jog through the hills of Nithsdale, just as I used to do on the banks of Ayr. I take the liberty to enclose you a few bagatelles, all of them the productions of my leisure thoughts in my Excise rides.

If you know or have ever seen Captain Grose, the antiquary, you will enter into any humour that is in the verses on him. Perhaps you have seen them before, as I sent them to a London newspaper.* Though, I daresay you have none of the Solemn-League-and-Covenant fire which shone so conspicuous in Lord George Gordon and the Kilmarnock weavers, yet I think you must have heard of Dr M'Gill, one of the Clergymen of Ayr, and his heretical book. God help him, poor man! Though he is one of the worthiest, as well as one of the ablest, of the whole priesthood of the Kirk of Scotland, in every sense of that ambiguous term, yet the poor doctor and his numerous family are in imminent danger of being thrown out to the mercy of the winter winds. The enclosed ballad ['The Kirk of Scotland's Alarm'] on that business is, I confess, too local; but I laughed myself at some conceits in it, though I am convinced in my conscience that there are a good many heavy stanzas in it too.

The Election Ballad [*The Five Carlines*], as you will see, alludes to the present canvass in our string of burghs. I do not believe there will be a harder-run match in the whole general election. The great

* The poem appeared in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of 27th August 1789 under the signature 'Thomas A. Linn.'

man here [the Duke of Queensberry], like all renegadoes, is a flaming zealot kicked out before the astonished indignation of his deserted master, and despised, I suppose, by the party who took him in to be a mustering fagot at the mysterious orgies of their midnight iniquities and a useful drudge in the dirty work of their country elections; he would fain persuade this part of the world that he is turned patriot, and, where he knows his men, has the impudence to aim away at the unmistrusting manner of a man of conscience and principle. Nay, to such an intemperate height has his zeal carried him that, in convulsive violence to every feeling in his bosom, he has made some desperate attempts at the hopeless business of getting himself a character for benevolence, and, in one or two terrible strides in pursuit of party-interest, has actually stumbled on something like meaning the welfare of his fellow-creatures. I beg your pardon, sir, if I differ from you in my idea of this great man; but were you to know his sins, as well of omission as commission, to this outraged land, you would club your curse with the execrating voice of the country. I am too little a man to have any political attachments; I am deeply indebted to, and have the warmest veneration for, individuals of both parties; but a man who has it in his power to be the father of a country, and who is only known to that country by the mischiefs he does in it, is a character of which one cannot speak with patience.

Sir James Johnstone does 'what man can do,' but yet I doubt his fate. Of the burgh of Annan he is secure; Kirkcudbright is dubious. He has the provost; but Lord Daer, who does the honours of great man to the place, makes every effort in his power for the opposite interest. Luckily for Sir James, his lordship, though a very good lord, is a very poor politician. Dumfries and Sanquhar are decidedly the duke's 'to let or sell;' so Lochmaben, a city containing upwards of fourscore living souls that cannot discern between their right hand and their left—for drunkenness—has at present the balance of power in her hands. The honourable council of that ancient burgh are fifteen in number; but alas! their fifteen names indorsing a bill of fifteen pounds, would not discount the said bill in any banking-office. My lord provost, who is one of the soundest-headed, best-hearted, whisky-drinking fellows in the south of Scotland, is devoted to Sir James; but his Grace thinks he has a majority of the council, though I, who have the honour to be a burgess of the town, and know somewhat behind the curtain, could tell him a different story.

The worst of it for the buff and blue folks is that their candidate, Captain Miller, my landlord's son, is, *entre nous*, a youth by no means above mediocrity in his abilities, and is said to have a huckster-lust for shillings, pence and farthings. This is the more remarkable, as his father's abilities and benevolence are so justly celebrated.

The song beginning 'Thou lingering star,' &c., is the last, and, in my own opinion, by much the best of the enclosed compositions. I beg leave to present it with my most respectful compliments to Mrs Graham.

I return you by the carrier, the bearer of this, Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Marshall's *Yorkshire*,* and *Angola*. *Les Contes de Fontaine*† is in the way of my trade and I must give it another reading or two. *Chansons Joyeuses*,‡ and another little French book, I keep for the same reason. I think you will not be reading them, and I will not keep them long.

Forgive me, sir, for the stupid length of this epistle. I pray Heaven it may find you in a humour to read *The Belfast New Almanac*, or *The Bachelor's Garland, containing five excellent new songs*,§ or the Paisley poet's version of the Psalms of David,‖ and then my impertinence may disgust the less.

I have the honour to be, sir, your ever-grateful, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

The ballad last mentioned is one in which he presents the five burghs in figurative characters: Dumfries, as Maggy on the banks of Nith; Annan, as Blinking Bess of Annandale; Kirkcudbright, as Whisky Jean of Galloway; Sanquhar, as Black Joan frae Crichton Peel; and Lochmaben, as Marjory of the many Lochs—appellations all of which have some appropriateness from local circumstances.

THE FIVE CARLINS,

AN ELECTION BALLAD.

There was five Carlins in the South, old women
They fell upon a scheme,
To send a lad to London town
To bring them tidings hame.

Nor only bring them tidings hame,
But do their errands there;
And aiblins gowd and honor baith possibly gold
Might be that laddie's share.

There was Maggy by the banks o' Nith,
A dame wi' pride eneugh;
And Marjory o' the mony Lochs,
A carlin auld and teugh. tough

* See *ante*. † La Fontaine.

‡ *Chansons Joyeuses* (1765), published anonymously, was attributed to the song-writer and dramatist Charles Collé (1709–83).

§ Title of a popular chap-book.

‖ *A new version of the whole Book of Psalms in Metre. . . .* By James Maxwell, S.D.P. [Student of Divine Poetry.] (Glasgow, 1773. 12mo.)—Maxwell (1720–1800) was a prolific rhymster. Most of his publications bear on the titles that the author is 'Poet in Paisley.'

And Blinkin Bess of Annandale,
That dwelt near Solway-side;
And whisky Jean, that took her gill,
In Galloway sae wide.

And Black Joan frae Crichton-Peel,
O' gipsy kith and kin:
Five wighter Carlins were na found — more powerful
The South Countrie within.

To send a lad to London town,
They met upon a day;
And mony a Knight, and mony a Laird,
That errand fain wad gae.

O mony a Knight, and mony a Laird,
This errand fain wad gae;
But nae ane could their fancy please,
O ne'er a ane but twae.

The first ane was a belted Knight,*
Bred of a Border-band;
And he wad gae to London town,
Might nae man him withstand.

And he wad do their errands weel,
And meikle he wad say; — much
And ilka ane about the court — every
Wad bid to him Gude-day.

Then niest cam in a Soger youth,† — next—soldier
Wha spak wi' modest grace,
And he wad gae to London town,
If sae their pleasure was.

He wad na hecht them courtly gifts, — promise
Nor meikle speech pretend;
But he would hecht an honest heart,
Wad ne'er desert his friend.

* Sir James Johnstone. † Captain Miller.

Then, wham to chuse and wham refuse,
At strife thir Carlins fell; these
For some had Gentlefolks to please,
And some wad please themsel.

Then out spak mim-mou'd Meg o' Nith, prim-mouthed
And she spak up wi' pride,
And she wad send the Soger youth,
Whatever might betide.

For the auld Gudeman o' London court *
She didna care a pin;
But she wad send the Soger youth,
To greet his eldest son.†

Then up sprang Bess o' Annandale,
And a deadly aith she 's ta'en,
That she wad vote the Border Knight,
Though she should vote her lane: alone

For far-aff fowls hae feathers fair,
And fools o' change are fain;
But I hae tried this Border Knight,
And I 'll try him yet again.

Says Black Joan frae Crichton-Peel,
A Carlin stoor and grim, austere
The auld Gudeman, and the young Gudeman,
For me may sink or swim:

For fools will prate o' right and wrang,
While knaves laugh them to scorn;
But the Soger's friends hae blawn the best,
So he shall bear the horn.

Then whisky Jean spak owre her drink,
Ye weel ken, kimmers a', gossips
The auld Gudeman o' London court,
His back 's been at the wa';

* The king. † The Prince of Wales.

And mony a friend that kiss'd his caup
  Is now a fremit wight ; estranged
But it 's ne'er be said o' whisky Jean—
  We 'll send the Border Knight.

Then slow raise Marjory o' the Lochs,
  And wrinkled was her brow,
Her ancient weed was russet gray,
  Her auld Scots bluid was true ;*

There 's some great folk set light by me,
  I set as light by them ;
But I will send to London town
  Wham I like best at hame.

Sae how this weighty plea may end, lawsuit
  Nae mortal wight can tell ;
God grant the King and ilka man
  May look weel to himsel !

TO MRS DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 13*th December* 1789.

Many thanks, dear Madam, for your sheet-full of rhymes. Though at present I am below the veriest prose, yet from you every thing pleases. I am groaning under the miseries of a diseased nervous system ; a system the state of all others the most essential to our happiness—or the most productive of our misery. For now near three weeks I have been so ill with a nervous head-ache, that I have been obliged to give up for a time my excise-books, being scarce able to lift my head, much less to ride once a week over ten muir parishes. Lord ! What is Man ! To-day, in the luxuriance of health, exulting in the enjoyment of existence ; in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, loaded with conscious painful being, counting the tardy pace of the lingering moments by the repercussions of anguish, and refusing or denied a comforter. Day follows night, and night comes after day, only to curse him with life which gives him no pleasure ; and yet the awful, dark termination of that life is a something —perhaps Nothing—at which he recoils with still more horror.

> Tell us, ye dead ; will none of you in pity
> Disclose the secret ——————
> *What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be?*
> —————— 'tis no matter :
> A little time will make us learn'd as you are.†

* This verse was a favourite with Sir Walter Scott, who used to recite it with good effect.
† Blair's *Grave ;* see Vol. II., p. 345.

Can it be possible that, when I resign this frail, feverish being, I shall still find myself in conscious existence! When the last gasp of agony has announced that I am no more to those that knew me and the few who loved me; when the cold, stiffened, unconscious, ghastly corse is resigned into the earth, to be the prey of unsightly reptiles and to become in time a trodden clod, shall I yet be warm in life, seeing and seen, enjoying and enjoyed? Ye venerable sages and holy flamens, is there probability in your many conjectures, any truth in your many stories, of another world beyond death; or are they all alike baseless visions and fabricated fables? If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the benevolent, the amiable and the humane; what a flattering idea, then, is a world to come! Would to God I as firmly believed it, as I ardently wish it! There I should meet an aged parent, now at rest from the many buffetings of an evil world against which he long and so bravely struggled. There should I meet the friend, the disinterested friend of my early life; the man who rejoiced to see me, because he loved me and could serve me. Muir!* thy weaknesses were the aberrations of human nature, but thy heart glowed with every thing generous, manly and noble; and if ever emanation from the All-good Being animated a human form, it was thine! There should I, with speechless agony of rapture, again recognize my lost, my ever dear Mary! whose bosom was fraught with truth, honor, constancy and love.

My Mary, dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of heavenly rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

Jesus Christ, thou amiablest of characters! I trust thou art no impostor and that thy revelation of blissful scenes of existence beyond death and the grave is not one of the many impositions which time after time have been palmed on credulous mankind. I trust that in thee 'shall all the families of the earth be blessed,' by being yet connected together in a better world where every tie that bound heart to heart, in this state of existence, shall be, far beyond our present conceptions, more endearing.

I am a good deal inclined to think with those who maintain that what are called nervous affections are in fact diseases of the mind. I cannot reason, I cannot think; and but to you, I would not venture to write any thing above an order to a cobbler. You have felt too much of the ills of life not to sympathize with a diseased wretch who is impaired more than half of any faculties he possessed. Your goodness will excuse this distracted scrawl which the writer dare scarcely read, and which he would throw into the fire, were he able to write any thing better or indeed any thing at all.

I am glad you have put me on transcribing my departed friend's epitaph. Transcribing saves me the trouble of thinking.

* Robert Muir of Kilmarnock.

EPITAPH ON R. MUIR.

What man could esteem or what woman could love
  Was he who lies under this sod;
If such Thou refusest admission above,
  Then whom wilt Thou favour, Good God?

Rumour told me something of a son of yours who was returned from the East or West Indies. If you have gotten news from James or Anthony, it was cruel in you not to let me know; as I promise you, on the sincerity of a man who is weary of one world and anxious about another, that scarce any thing could give me so much pleasure as to hear of any good thing befalling my honored friend.

If you have a minute's leisure, take up your pen in pity to *le pauvre misérable.*

R. B.

There is no difficulty in reconciling this letter with that written four days before to Mr Graham, in which Burns speaks of a cheerful and alert performance of his Excise duties, or with a very jocular letter written only a week afterwards to the provost of Lochmaben. He was in low spirits; and, having to write to Mrs Dunlop, Burns attuned his mind accordingly, and poured out this effusion, expressing feelings which were no doubt perfectly sincere, although very likely the first walk out to the river-side in the eye of the morning sun, or the first ride across the Dunscore Hills in quest of fiscal delinquents, set him off into a totally different strain of emotion.

Amongst the gentry of Dumfriesshire, Burns was led by his Jacobitism to single out for special regard the Lady Winifred Maxwell, granddaughter of that Earl of Nithsdale who owed his escape from the block, for his concern in the insurrection of 1715, solely to the heroism and ingenuity of his wife, with whom he exchanged clothes in the Tower the night before his intended execution. It was only the illness alluded to in the letter to Mrs Dunlop that prevented him from being introduced to her.

TO LADY WINIFRED MAXWELL CONSTABLE.*

Ellisland, 16*th December* 1789.

My Lady—In vain have I from day to day expected to hear from Mrs Young, as she promised me at Dalswinton that she would do me the

* Lady Winifred Maxwell, only surviving child of the sixth Earl of Nithsdale, succeeded to the family estates on the death of her father in 1776. She had married, in 1758, William Haggerston Constable of Everingham, who assumed the name and arms of Maxwell. She died in 1801 (aged sixty-five). The family is now represented by Baron Herries.

honour to introduce me at Tinwald; and it was impossible, not from your ladyship's accessibility, but from my own feelings, that I could go alone. Lately, indeed, Mr Maxwell of Carruchan, in his usual goodness, offered to accompany me, when an unlucky indisposition on my part hindered my embracing the opportunity. To court the notice or the tables of the great, except where I sometimes have had a little matter to ask of them, or more often the pleasanter task of witnessing my gratitude to them, is what I never have done and I trust never shall do. But with your ladyship I have the honor to be connected by one of the strongest and most endearing ties in the whole world: Common sufferers, in a cause where even to be unfortunate is glorious, the cause of heroic loyalty! Though my fathers had not illustrious honors and vast properties to hazard in the contest, though they left their humble cottages only to add so many units more to the unnoted crowd that followed their leaders, yet what they could they did and what they had they lost: with unshaken firmness and unconcealed political attachments, they shook hands with ruin for what they esteemed the cause of their king and their country. This language, and the enclosed verses* are for your ladyship's eye alone. Poets are not very famous for their prudence; but as I can do nothing for a cause which is now nearly no more, I do not wish to hurt myself.

I have the honor to be, my lady, your ladyship's obliged and obedient humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

TO PROVOST MAXWELL OF LOCHMABEN.

ELLISLAND, 20*th December* 1789.

DEAR PROVOST—As my friend Mr Graham goes for your good town to-morrow, I cannot resist the temptation to send you a few lines; and as I have nothing to say, I have chosen this sheet of foolscap and begun, as you see, at the top of the first page, because I have ever observed that when once people have fairly set out, they know not where to stop. Now, that my first sentence is concluded, I have nothing to do but to pray Heaven to help me on to another. Shall I write you on politics, or religion—two master-subjects for your sayers of nothing? Of the first, I dare say by this time you are nearly surfeited;† and for the last, whatever they may talk of it who make it a kind of company concern, I never could endure it beyond a soliloquy. I might write you on farming, on building, on marketing; but my poor distracted mind is so torn, so jaded, so racked and bedeviled with the task of the superlatively damned, to make *one guinea do the business of three*, that I detest, abhor, and

* 'Address to William Tytler, Esq.,' Vol. II., pp. 100, 101.

† The provost, as the leading voter in 'Marjory of Monie Lochs,' must have had enough of politics.

swoon at the very word 'business,' though no less than four letters of my very short surname are in it.

Well, to make a matter short, I shall betake myself to a subject ever fruitful of themes—a subject the turtle-feast of the sons of Satan and the delicious sugar-plum of the babes of grace—a subject sparkling with all the jewels that wit can find in the mines of genius, and pregnant with all the stores of learning from Moses and Confucius to Franklin and Priestley—in short, may it please your Lordship, I intend to write . . .

['*Here*' (*says Allan Cunningham*) '*the Poet inserted a song which can only be sung at times when the Punch Bowl has done its duty and wild wit is set free.*']

If at any time you expect a field-day in your town—a day when Dukes, Earls, and Knights pay their court to weavers, tailors and cobblers, I should like to know of it two or three days beforehand. It is not that I care three skips of a cur-dog for the politics, but I should like to see such an exhibition of human nature. If you meet with that worthy old veteran in religion and good-fellowship, Mr Jeffrey, or any of his amiable family, I beg you will give them my best compliments.

R. B.

In the last paragraph of this letter, Burns alludes to the minister of Lochmaben.* In the course of his travels, he occasionally visited the manse. Mr Jaffray had an only daughter, Jean, a sweet, blue-eyed girl, who at one of Burns's visits, probably the first, did the honours of the table. Next morning, the poet produced this song:

THE BLUE-EYED LASSIE.†

I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen, road—yester-evening
A gate, I fear, I 'll dearly rue:
I gat my death frae twa sweet een, eyes
Twa lovely een o' bonie blue.
'Twas not her golden ringlets bright,
Her lips, like roses wat wi' dew, wet
Her heaving bosom, lily-white—
It was her een sae bonie blue.

* Andrew Jaffray had been translated from Tundergarth to Ruthwell, and thence to Lochmaben (1783). He received the degree of D.D. in 1793, and died 1795 (aged seventy-three). Jean Jaffray was born 1773; married 1794; died 1850.

† This song was printed in Johnson's *Museum*, with an air composed by Riddel of Glenriddel. It was set by George Thomson to the tune of 'The Blathrie o't.'

She talk'd, she smil'd, my heart she wyl'd, beguiled
She charm'd my soul I wist na how;
And ay the stound, the deadly wound, pang
Cam fra her een sae bonie blue.
But, 'spare to speak, and spare to speed,'*
She 'll aiblins listen to my vow: perhaps
Should she refuse, I 'll lay my dead death
To her twa een sae bonie blue.

Miss Jaffray married a gentleman named Renwick, of Liverpool and, afterwards, New York, and was living there about 1822, when a son of Burns's correspondent George Thomson was introduced to her by her son, a professor in Columbia College. Mr Thomson gave the following account of her to his father: 'She is a widow—has still the remains of Burns's delightful portrait of her: her *twa sweet een* that gave him his *death* are yet clear and full of expression. She has great suavity of manners and much good sense.' He then adds from her recollection a charming picture of the manners of Burns in refined and agreeable society. 'She told me that she often looks back with a melancholy satisfaction on the many evenings she spent in the company of the great bard, in the social circle of her father's fireside, listening to the brilliant sallies of his imagination and to his delightful conversation. "Many times," said she, "have I seen Burns enter my father's dwelling in a cold rainy night, after a long ride over the dreary moors. On such occasions one of the family would help to disencumber him of his dreadnought and boots, while others brought him a pair of slippers and made him a warm dish of tea. It was during these visits that he felt himself perfectly happy, and opened his whole soul to us, repeated and even sang many of his admirable songs, and enchanted all who had the good fortune to be present with his manly, luminous observations and artless manners. I never," she added, "could fancy that Burns had ever followed the rustic occupation of the plough, because everything he said or did had a gracefulness and charm that was in an extraordinary degree engaging."'†

On the death of her husband, the thirteenth Earl, Lady

* A proverbial expression, meaning 'If you don't speak, you 'll never come any speed,' and is equivalent to the English 'Faint heart never won fair lady.'

† New edition of Mr Thomson's *Melodies*, 1830.

Glencairn had settled at Coates, near Edinburgh, with the younger of her two daughters, Lady Betty Cunningham.*

TO LADY ELIZABETH CUNNINGHAM.†

ELLISLAND, 23*d Decr.* 1789.

MY LADY—The honour you have done your poor poet in writing him so very obliging a letter, and the pleasure the inclosed beautiful verses have given him, came very seasonably to his aid amid the cheerless gloom and sinking despondency of December weather and diseased nerves. As to forgetting the family of Glencairn, with which you tax me, Heaven is my witness with what sincerity I could use those simple, rude, but, I think, strongly expressive old, verses—

> If thee, Jerus'lem, I forget,
> Skill part from my right hand.
> My tongue to my mouth's roof let cleave,
> If I do thee forget,
> Jerusalem, and thee above
> My chief joy do not set!

When I am tempted to do anything improper, I dare not, because I look on myself as accountable to your Ladyship and Family; when now and then I have the honor to be called to the tables of the Great, if I happen to meet with anything mortifying from the stately stupidity of self-sufficient Squires, or the luxuriant insolence of upstart Nabobs, I get above the creatures by calling to remembrance that I am patronised by the Noble House of Glencairn; and at gala times such as New year's day, a Christening, or the Kirn-night,‡ when my punch-bowl is brought from its dusty corner and filled up in honor of the occasion, I begin with, The Countess of Glencairn! My good woman with the enthusiasm of a grateful heart next cries, My Lord! and so the toast goes on untill I end with Lady Hariet's little angel whose Epithalamium I have pledged myself to write.

When I received your Ladyship's letter, I was in the act of transcribing the inclosed Poems such as they are for you; and meant to have sent them my first leisure hour and acquainted you with a late change in my way of life. By the generous friendship of one of the first of men, Mr Graham of Fintry, I have got the Excise Division in the midst of which I live; and considering my unlucky bargain of a farm, I find £50 per An, which is now our salary, an exceeding good thing. People may talk as they please of the ignominy of the Excise, but what will support my family and keep me independant of the world is

* The estate of Finlayston—but not the title of Glencairn (which is now extinct) devolved on Robert Graham of Gartmore, on the death of the fifteenth earl, in 1796. That gentleman assumed the name and arms of Cunninghame. The present representative of the family is Mr R. B. Cunninghame-Graham.

† The original is now in the library of the University of Edinburgh.

‡ Harvest-home.

to me a very important matter; and I had much rather that my Profession borrowed credit from me, than that I borrowed credit from my Profession. Another advantage I have in this business is, the knowledge it gives of the various shades of Human Character; and consequently assisting me in my trade as a Poet. Not that I am in haste for the Press, as my Lord has been told: had it been so, I would have been highly wanting to myself, not to have consulted my noble, generous Patron; but still, to be Poet, is my highest ambition, my dearest wish, and my unwearied study. I am aware that though I were to give to the world performances superior to my former works, if they were productions of the same kind, the comparative reception they would meet with would mortify me. For this reason I wish still to secure my old friend, Novelty, on my side, by the kind of my performances; I have some thoughts of the Drama. Considering the favorite things of the day, the two and three act pieces of Okeefe,* Mrs Inchbald, &c., does not your Ladyship think that a Scotish Audience would be better pleased with the Affectation (*sic*), Whim and Folly of their own native growth, than with manners which to by far the greatest of them can be only second hand?

No man knows what Nature has fitted him for untill he try; and if after a preparatory course of some years' study of Men and Books, I should find myself unequal to the task, there is no great harm done —Virtue and Study are their own reward. I have got Shakespeare, and begun with him; and I shall stretch a point and make myself master of all the Dramatic Authors of any repute, in both English and French, the only languages which I know.

I ought to apologise to your Ladyship for sending you some of the inclosed rhymes, they are so silly. Everybody knows now of poor Dr McGill. He is my particular friend, and my Ballad on his prosecution has virulence enough, if it has not wit. You must not read Lady Glencairn† the stanza about the Priest of Ochiltree. Though I know him to be a designing, rotten-hearted Puritan, yet perhaps her Ladyship has a different idea of him. The Ode to the Regency bill was mangled in a Newspaper last winter. The Election ballad alludes to our present canvass in this string of Boroughs. I do not suppose there will be a harder run match in the whole General Election. I have avoided taking a side in Politics. The Song is the only one of the inclosed Pieces that I think worthy of being sent to so good a judge as your Ladyship. I will not add to this tedious epistle more than to assure your Ladyship with what grateful sincerity I have the honor to be, your Ladyship's highly oblidged and most obedient humble servt.,

ROBT. BURNS.

* John O'Keeffe (1747–1833), dramatist, had pieces produced at the Haymarket in 1779. His *Wild Oats* is still played, and Buckstone revived his *Castle of Andalusia.*

† The Dowager Lady Glencairn was patron of the parish of Ochiltree, and the Rev. David Grant (1750–1791), whom she presented in 1786, was revered by all the Evangelical party. 'He was singularly upright in his intentions, animated in address, and cheerful in conversation. . . . His piety was unaffected.'—Hew Scott's *Fasti Eccles. Scot.,* Part III., p. 134.

CHAPTER II.

ELLISLAND, 1790.

BURNS was at this time overloaded with business, and at the same time as much the victim of hypochondria as if he had been idle. Yet he found time to pay occasional visits to Dumfries, in order to witness the performances of a company of players who had temporarily settled there. He was even prompted by what he saw to think of dramatic composition. But neither at this time, nor afterwards, did he ever write anything for the stage but an occasional address or epilogue.

Burns began the new year with a characteristic piece of moralisation.

SKETCH—NEW-YEAR'S DAY.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

This day, Time winds th' exhausted chain,
To run the twelvemonths' length again:
I see the old, bald-pated fellow,
With ardent eyes, complexion sallow,
Adjust the unimpair'd machine,
To wheel the equal, dull routine.

The absent lover, minor heir,
In vain assail him with their prayer;
Deaf as my friend, he sees them press,
Nor makes the hour one moment less.

Will you (the Major 's* with the hounds;
The happy tenants share his rounds;
Coila 's fair Rachel's† care to-day,
And blooming Keith 's engaged with Gray)
From housewife cares a minute borrow—
That grandchild's cap will do to-morrow—
And join with me a-moralizing—
This day 's propitious to be wise in.
First, what did yesternight deliver?
'Another year is gone for ever.'
And what is this day's strong suggestion?
'The passing moment 's all we rest on!'
Rest on—for what? what do we here?
Or why regard the passing year?
Will Time, amus'd with proverb'd lore,
Add to our date one minute more?
A few days may—a few years must—
Repose us in the silent dust.
Then, is it wise to damp our bliss?
Yes—all such reasonings are amiss!
The voice of Nature loudly cries,
And many a message from the skies,
That something in us never dies:
That on this frail, uncertain state,
Hang matters of eternal weight:
That future-life in worlds unknown
Must take its hue from this alone;
Whether as heavenly glory bright,
Or dark as Misery's woeful night.

Since then, my honor'd first of friends,
On this poor being all depends;
Let us th' important *now* employ,
And live as those who never die.
Tho' you, with days and honors crown'd,
Witness that filial circle round

* Andrew, *fourth* son of Mrs Dunlop, had passed through the American war, and attained the rank of major. He died, unmarried, in 1804.

† Rachel, *fourth* daughter of Mrs Dunlop, was making a sketch of Coila; Keith was Mrs Dunlop's *fifth* daughter.

(A sight life's sorrows to repulse,
A sight pale Envy to convulse),
Others now claim your chief regard;
Yourself, you wait your bright reward.

TO MR GEORGE S. SUTHERLAND, PLAYWRIGHT, NEAR DUMFRIES.

ELLISLAND, *Thursday morning* [*Dec.* 31, 1789].

SIR—Jogging home yesternight, it occurred to me that as your next night is the first night of the New Year, a few lines allusive to the Season by way of Prologue, Interlude or what you please, might take pretty well. The enclosed verses are very incorrect, because they are almost the first crude suggestions of my Muse, by way of bearing me company in my darkling journey. I am sensible it is too late to send you them; but if they can any way serve you, use, alter, or, if you please, neglect, them. I shall not be in the least mortified though they are never heard of; but if they can be of any service to Mr Sutherland and his friends, I shall kiss my hands to my lady Muse, and own myself much her debtor.—I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

PROLOGUE FOR MR GEORGE S. SUTHERLAND.

SPOKEN AT THE THEATRE, DUMFRIES, ON NEW-YEAR'S DAY EVENING.

No song nor dance I bring from yon great city,
That queens it o'er our taste—the more 's the pity:
Tho', by the bye, abroad why will you roam?
Good sense and taste are natives here at home:
But not for panegyric I appear,
I come to wish you all a good New Year!
Old Father Time deputes me here before ye,
Not for to preach, but tell his simple story:
The sage, grave Ancient cough'd, and bade me say
'You 're one year older this important day,'
If *wiser*, too—he hinted some suggestion,
But 'twould be rude, you know, to ask the question;
And, with a would-be-roguish leer and wink,
Said—'Sutherland, in one word, bid them THINK!'

Ye sprightly youths, quite flush with hope and spirit,
Who think to storm the world by dint of merit,
To you the dotard has a deal to say,
In his sly, dry, sententious, proverb way!
He bids you mind, amid your thoughtless rattle,
That the first blow is ever half the battle;
That tho' some by the skirt may try to snatch him,
Yet by the forelock is the hold to catch him;
That whether doing, suffering or forbearing,
You may do miracles by persevering.

Last, tho' not least in love, ye youthful fair,
Angelic forms, high Heaven's peculiar care!
To you old Bald-pate smooths his wrinkled brow,
And humbly begs you 'll mind the important—NOW!
To crown your happiness he asks your leave,
And offers bliss to give and to receive.

For our sincere, tho' haply weak endeavours,
With grateful pride we own your many favours;
And howsoe'er your tongues may ill reveal it,
Believe our glowing bosoms truly feel it.

TO MR GILBERT BURNS.

ELLISLAND, 11*th January* 1790.

DEAR BROTHER—I mean to take advantage of the frank, though I have not, in my present frame of mind, much appetite for exertion in writing. My nerves are in a damnable state. I feel that horrid hypochondria pervading every atom of both body and soul. This farm has undone my enjoyment of myself. It is a ruinous affair on all hands. But let it go to hell! I 'll fight it out and be off with it.

We have gotten a set of very decent players here just now. I have seen them an evening or two. David Campbell, in Ayr, wrote me by the manager of the company, a Mr Sutherland, who is indeed a man of genius and apparent worth. On New-year-day evening I gave him the following prologue, which he spouted to his audience with applause.

[Prologue—see above.]

I can no more. If once I were clear of this accursed farm, I shall respire more at ease.—I am, yours, ROBT. BURNS.

Three days after the writing of this letter, he was restored to a calmer humour.

TO MR WILLIAM DUNBAR, W.S., EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, 14*th January* 1790.

Since we are, here creatures of a day, since 'a few summer days and a few winter nights, and the life of man is at an end,' why, my dear much-esteemed Sir, should you and I let negligent indolence, for I know it is nothing worse, step in between us and bar the enjoyment of a mutual correspondence? We are not shapen out of the common, heavy, methodical clod, the elemental stuff of the plodding selfish race, the sons of Arithmetic and Prudence; our feelings and hearts are not benumbed and poisoned by the cursed influence of riches which, whatever blessing they may be in other respects, are no friends to the nobler qualities of the heart: in the name of random sensibility, then, let never the moon change on our silence any more. I have had a tract of bad health most part of this winter, else you had heard from me long ere now. Thank heaven, I am now got so much better as to be able to partake a little in the enjoyments of life.

Our friend Cunningham will perhaps have told you of my going into the Excise. The truth is, I found it a very convenient business to have £50 per annum, nor have I yet felt any of these mortifying circumstances in it that I was led to fear.

Feb. 2d.—I have not, for sheer hurry of business, been able to spare five minutes to finish my letter. Besides my farm-business, I ride on my Excise matters at least 200 miles every week. I have not by any means given up the Muses. You will see in the third volume of Johnson's 'Scots Songs' that I have contributed my mite there.

But, my dear Sir, little ones that look up to you for paternal protection are an important charge. I have already two fine, healthy, stout little fellows, and I wish to throw some light upon them. I have a thousand reveries and schemes about them and their future destiny. Not that I am an Utopian projector in these things. I am resolved never to breed up a son of mine to any of the learned professions. I know the value of independence; and since I cannot give my sons an independent fortune, I shall give them an independent line of life. What a chaos of hurry, chance and changes is this world, when one sits soberly down to reflect on it! To a father, who himself knows the world, the thought that he shall have sons to usher into it must fill him with dread; but if he have daughters, the prospect in a thoughtful moment is apt to shock him.

I hope Mrs Fordyce and the two young ladies are well. Do let me forget that they are nieces of yours and let me say that I never saw a more interesting, sweeter pair of sisters in my life. I am the fool of my

feelings and attachments. I often take up a volume of my Spenser to realize you to my imagination,* and think over the social scenes we have had together. God grant that there may be another world more congenial to honest fellows beyond this. A world where these rubs and plagues of absence, distance, misfortunes, ill-health, &c., shall no more damp hilarity and divide friendship. This I know is your throng [busy] season, but half a page will much oblige, my dear Sir, Yours Sincerely,

R. B.

Mrs Dunlop appears to have at this time sent the poet a present, perhaps for his thirty-first birthday, which was approaching. On that day he wrote to her one of the most interesting of his letters :

TO MRS DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 25*th January* 1790.

It has been owing to unremitting hurry of business that I have not written you, Madam, long ere now. My health is greatly better and I now begin once more to share in satisfaction and enjoyment with the rest of my fellow-creatures.

Many thanks, my much-esteemed friend, for your kind letters : only, why will you make me run the risk of being contemptible and mercenary in my own eyes? When I pique myself on my independent spirit, I hope it is neither poetic licence nor poetic rant; and I am so flattered with the honour you have done me, in making me your compeer in friendship and friendly correspondence, that I cannot, without pain and a degree of mortification, be reminded of the real inequality between our situations.

Most sincerely do I rejoice with you, dear Madam, in the good news of Anthony. Not only your anxiety about his fate, but my own esteem for such a noble, warm-hearted, manly young fellow, in the little I had of his acquaintance, has interested me deeply in his fortunes.

Falconer, the unfortunate author of the 'Shipwreck,' that glorious poem which you so much admire, is no more. After weathering the dreadful catastrophe he so feelingly describes in his poem and after weathering many hard gales of fortune, he went to the bottom with the *Aurora* frigate! I forget what part of Scotland had the honor of giving him birth, but he was the son of obscurity and misfortune.† He was one of those daring adventurous spirits which Scotland beyond any other nation is remarkable for producing. Little does the fond mother think, as she hangs delighted over the sweet little leech at her bosom, where the poor

* The poet's copy of Spenser was a present from William Dunbar.

† Falconer was son of a barber in the Netherbow of Edinburgh.

fellow may hereafter wander and what may be his fate. I remember a stanza in an old Scottish ballad,* which, notwithstanding its rude simplicity, speaks feelingly to the heart:

Little did my mother think,
That day she cradled me,
What land I was to travel in,
Or what death I should die!

Old Scots song are, you know, a favorite study and pursuit of mine, and now I am on that subject, allow me to give you two stanzas of another old simple ballad, which I am sure will please you. The catastrophe of the piece is a poor ruined female lamenting her fate. She concludes with this pathetic wish:

O that my father had ne'er on me smil'd;
O that my mother had ne'er to me sung!
O that my cradle had never been rock'd;
But that I had died when I was young!

O that the grave it were my bed;
My blankets were my winding sheet;
The clocks and the worms my bedfellows a'; beetles
And O sae sound as I would sleep!

I do not remember in all my reading to have met with any thing more truly the language of misery than the exclamation in the last line. Misery is like love: to speak its language truly, the author must have felt it.

I am every day expecting the doctor to give your little godson† the small-pox.‡ They are *rife* in the country, and I tremble for his fate. By the way, I cannot help congratulating you on his looks and spirit. Every person who sees him acknowledges him to be the finest, handsomest child he has ever seen. I am myself delighted with the manly swell of his little chest and a certain miniature dignity in the carriage of his head, and the glance of his fine black eye, which promise the undaunted gallantry of an independent mind.

I thought to have sent you some rhymes, but time forbids. I promise you poetry, until you are tired of it, next time I have the honor of assuring you how truly I am, Dear madam, your obliged and humble servant,

R. B.

About this time the Clarinda correspondence was renewed for a brief period, the following letter being an answer to one from

* Queen Mary had four attendants of her own Christian name. In the ballad mentioned by Burns—'The Queen's Maries'—one of these gentlewomen is described as murdering her illegitimate child, and suffering for the crime; and the verse quoted is one of her last expressions at the place of execution. Professor Child thinks the incident on which the ballad is founded occurred at the Court of Peter the Great.

† The poet's second son, Francis Wallace.

‡ Burns here refers to inoculation; vaccination was not discovered till 1796.

Mrs M'Lehose, which has not been preserved. Doubtless the song with which it closes was written in compliment to his correspondent.

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.

[Ellisland, *About end of January* 1790.]*

I have, indeed, been ill, Madam, the whole winter. An incessant headache, depression of spirits, and all the truly miserable consequences of a deranged nervous system have made dreadful havoc of my health and peace. Add to all this, a line of life into which I have lately entered obliges me to ride, upon an average, at least two hundred miles every week. However, thank Heaven I am now greatly better in my health. * * * *

I cannot, will not, enter into extenuatory circumstances; else I could show you how my precipitate, headlong, unthinking conduct leagued, with a conjuncture of unlucky events, to thrust me out of a possibility of keeping the path of rectitude, to curse me by an irreconcilable war between my duty and my nearest wishes, and to damn me with a choice only of different species of error and misconduct.

I dare not trust myself further with this subject. The following song is one of my latest productions, and I send it you, as I would do any thing else, because it pleases myself.

MY LOVELY NANCY.†

Tune—*The Quaker's Wife.*

I.

Thine am I, my faithful fair,
Thine, my lovely Nancy;
Ev'ry pulse along my veins,
Ev'ry roving fancy.

II.

To thy bosom lay my heart,
There to throb and languish:
Tho' despair had wrung its core,
That would heal its anguish.

* In the authorised edition of the correspondence (1843), this letter is conjecturally dated 'Spring of 1791.' The hypochondria complained of, and the allusion to the recent entrance upon the Excise business, seem to carry it a year further back.

† This poem was sent to George Thomson in 1793. It has been surmised, therefore, that it was not written till that year, and that the editor of the Clarinda correspondence inserted it, without authority, in place of 'To Mary in Heaven.' In support of this view, however, no reliable evidence has been brought forward.

III.

Take away those rosy lips
  Rich with balmy treasure;
Turn away thine eyes of love,
  Lest I die with pleasure.

IV.

What is life when wanting love?
  Night without a morning:
Love 's the cloudless summer sun
  Nature gay adorning.

R. B.

A small fragment of a letter which Burns appears to have addressed to Mrs M'Lehose, immediately after receiving a reply to the preceding, contains one characteristic burst of sentiment: 'I could not answer your last letter but one. When you in so many words tell a man that you look on his letters with a smile of contempt, in what language, madam, can he answer you? Though I were conscious that I had acted wrong—and I am conscious that I have acted wrong—yet would I not be bullied into repentance; but your last letter . . . Madam, determined as you. . . .' The reverse of the fragment contains the verses 'To Mary in Heaven.'*

Towards the conclusion of the theatrical season at Dumfries, Burns once more furnished Mr Sutherland with a prologue:

TO MR GEORGE S. SUTHERLAND,
WITH A SCOTS PROLOGUE FOR HIS BENEFIT-NIGHT.

I was much disappointed, my dear Sir, in wanting your most agreeable company yesterday. However, I heartily pray for good weather next Sunday; and, whatever aerial Being has the guidance of the elements, that he may take any other half dozen Sundays he pleases, and clothe them with

Vapours and clouds and storms,
Until he terrify himself
At combustion of his own raising.

I shall see you on Wednesday forenoon. In the greatest hurry, &c.

Monday Morning [*1st Feb.* 1790]. R. B.

* The conjecture has been hazarded that this fragment originally formed part of the previous letter to Mrs M'Lehose. All that can be said with certainty on the subject is that, when discovered, it was endorsed by Clarinda 'Received Feb. 5, 1790.'

PROLOGUE FOR MR SUTHERLAND, ON HIS BENEFIT-NIGHT.

What needs this din about the town o' Lon'on,
How this new play an' that new sang is comin'?
Why is outlandish stuff sae meikle courted? much
Does nonsense mend, like whisky, when imported?
Is there nae poet, burning keen for fame,
Will try to gie us sangs and plays at hame? give
For Comedy abroad he needna toil,
A fool and knave are plants of every soil;
Nor need he hunt as far as Rome and Greece
To gather matter for a serious piece;
There 's themes enow in Caledonian story enough
Would shew the Tragic Muse in a' her glory.

Is there no daring bard will rise, and tell
How glorious Wallace stood, how, hapless, fell?
Where are the Muses fled that could produce
A drama worthy o' the name o' Bruce?
How here, even here, he first unsheath'd the sword
'Gainst mighty England and her guilty lord;
And after mony a bloody, deathless doing,
Wrenched his dear country from the jaws of ruin!
O for a Shakspeare or an Otway scene
To draw the lovely, hapless Scottish Queen!
Vain all th' omnipotence of female charms
'Gainst headlong, ruthless, mad Rebellion's arms:
She fell, but fell with spirit truly Roman,
To glut the vengeance of a rival woman:
A woman—though the phrase may seem uncivil—
As able and as cruel as the devil!
One Douglas lives in Home's immortal page,*
But Douglasses were heroes every age:
And though your fathers, prodigal of life,
A Douglas followed to the martial strife,
Perhaps, if bowls † row right, and Right succeeds,
Ye yet may follow where a Douglas leads!

* *Douglas, a Tragedy*, by John Home.

† If bowls (in the game) roll.

As ye hae generous done, if a' the land
Would take the Muses' servants by the hand;
Not only hear, but patronise, befriend them,
And where ye justly can commend, commend them;
And aiblins, when they winna stand the test, perhaps—will not
Wink hard and say 'The folks hae done their best!'
Would a' the land do this, then I 'll be caition caution, security
Ye 'll soon hae poets o' the Scottish nation
Will gar Fame blaw until her trumpet crack, make
And warsle Time, and lay him on his back! wrestle with

For us and for our stage should ony spier, inquire
'Wha 's aught thae chiels maks a' this bustle here?' * fellows
My best leg foremost, I 'll set up my brow,
We have the honour to belong to you!
We 're your ain bairns, e'en guide us as ye like, own children —treat us
But like gude mithers, shore before you strike. warn
And gratefu' still I hope ye 'll ever find us,
For a' the patronage and meikle kindness much = great
We 've got frae a' professions, sets, and ranks:
God help us! we 're but poor—ye 'se get but thanks. ye shall

It is not improbable that the prologue, though written for Mr Sutherland, was intended for his wife's, and not his, benefit-night. If not, then the prologue referred to in the following letter has not yet seen the light:

TO DAVID STAIG, ESQ., DUMFRIES.†

SIR—My friend and fellow-laborer in scaling the barren heights of Parnassus, Mr Sutherland, having asked me for a Prologue, or something like it, for Mrs Sutherland's benefit-night, I have composed a Prologue, 'or something like it,' for him, as you will see by the Inclosed. It is not for its *merit* that I trouble you with a copy of it: if it escape dam-

* 'To whom do these fellows belong who are making all this bustle here?'—'Wha's aught' means 'who owns.'

† Here first published from the MS.—at present (1896) with Mr Hew Morrison, Edinburgh Public Library. David Staig, who died in 1826, at the age of eighty-three, was one of the most popular and energetic of the provosts of Dumfries. He was first elected to the chief-magistracy in 1783, and repeatedly afterwards; his reign covered in all a period of twenty years. Dumfries owes much to Provost Staig. He was instrumental in securing for it an academy, a new quay, and a new bridge, and in establishing mail-coach communication between Edinburgh, Dumfries, and Portpatrick.

nation, it will be 'of *Grace*, not of *Works*;' but there is a dark stroke * of Politics in the belly of the Piece, and like a faithful loyal Subject, I lay it before You, as the chief Magistrate of the Country, at least the only Magistrate whom I have met with in the Country who had the honor to be very conspicuous as a Gentleman; that if the said Poem be found to contain any Treason, or words of treasonable construction, or any Fama clamosa, or Scandalum magnatum, against our Sovereign lord the King, or any of his liege subjects, the said Prologue may not see the light. Mr Sutherland may probably mention the circumstance, for your strictures, or I may possibly meet with you on Wednesday in your market-day perambulations.

To tell the truth, the whole truth (in the language of that elegant Science, the Law), the real reason why I trouble you with this, is, that I had a woman's longing for an opportunity of this kind to assure you, how gratefully and truly, I have the honor to be, Sir, your obliged and obedient humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, *Monday morn.*

The third volume of the *Scots Musical Museum* had been making progress, somewhat more slowly than the second, but with an equal amount of assistance from Burns. It was issued in the beginning of February 1790, with the following preface by the poet:

PREFACE TO JOHNSON'S 'SCOTS MUSICAL MUSEUM,' VOL. III., 1790.

Now that the Editor gives this third Volume of *The Scots Musical Museum* to the Public, he hopes it will not be found unworthy of the Volumes already Published. As this is not one of those many Publications which are hourly ushered into the World merely to catch the eye of Fashion in her frenzy of a day, the Editor has little to hope or fear from the herd of readers.

Consciousness of the well-known merit of our Scottish Music, and the national fondness of a Scotch-man for the productions of his own country, are at once the Editor's motive and apology for this Undertaking; and where any of the Pieces in the Collection may perhaps be found wanting at the Critical Bar of the First, he appeals to the honest prejudices of the Last.

Besides the songs already cited since the date of the second volume, Burns contributed many which, as they make no particular reference to his own history, and cannot otherwise be

* If this letter alludes to the prologue already given, possibly 'the dark stroke of politics' is

Perhaps, if bowls row right, and Right succeeds,
Ye yet may follow where a Douglas leads!

dated, are here presented in one group. Several of them are, however, only old songs mended or extended by Burns.

TIBBIE DUNBAR.

TUNE—*Johnny M'Gill.**

O wilt thou go wi' me, sweet Tibbie Dunbar?
O wilt thou go wi' me, sweet Tibbie Dunbar?
Wilt thou ride on a horse or be drawn in a car
Or walk by my side, O sweet Tibbie Dunbar?

I care na thy daddie his lands and his money; I don't care for
I care na thy kin, sae high and sae lordly;
But say thou wilt hae me, for better, for waur, worse
And come in thy coatie, sweet Tibbie Dunbar. in thy petticoat (*i.e.* without dowry)

THE GARDENER WI' HIS PAIDLE.

TUNE—*The Gardener's March.*

[It will be found that Burns subsequently produced a new version of this song, changing the burden at the close of the stanzas.]

When rosy May comes in wi' flowers,
To deck her gay, green-spreading bowers,
Then busy, busy are his hours,
The Gardener wi' his paidle. small hoe

The crystal waters gently fa',
The merry birds are lovers a',
The scented breezes round him blaw,
The Gardener wi' his paidle.

When purple morning starts the hare
To steal upon her early fare,
Then thro' the dews he maun repair, must
The Gardener wi' his paidle.

* The air has been claimed as Irish.

When day, expiring in the west,
The curtain draws of Nature's rest,
He flies to her arms he lo'es the best,
The Gardener wi' his paidle.

HIGHLAND HARRY.

TUNE—*Highlander's Lament.*

[Of this song Burns says in the Glenriddel notes: 'The oldest title I ever heard to this air was "The Highland Watch's Farewell to Ireland." The chorus I picked up from an old woman in Dunblane; the rest of the song is mine.' It is evident that the poet has understood the chorus in a Jacobite sense, and written his own verses in that strain accordingly. Peter Buchan has, nevertheless, affirmed 'that the original song related to a love attachment between Harry Lumsdale, the second son of a Highland gentleman, and Mrs Jeanie Gordon, daughter to the Laird of Knockespock, in Aberdeenshire. The lady was married to her cousin, Habichie Gordon, a son of the Laird of Rhynie; and some time after, her former lover having met her and shaken her hand, her husband drew his sword in anger, and lopped off several of Lumsdale's fingers, which Highland Harry took so much to heart that he soon after died.'—See Hogg and Motherwell's edition of Burns, ii., 197.]

My Harry was a gallant gay,
Fu' stately strade he on the plain;
But now he 's banish'd far away,
I 'll never see him back again.

Chorus—O for him back again!
O for him back again!
I wad gie a' Knockhaspie's land
For Highland Harry back again!

When a' the lave gae to their bed, rest
I wander dowie up the glen; sad
I set me down and greet my fill, weep
And ay I wish him back again.

O were some villains hangit high,
And ilka body had their ain! every
Then I might see the joyfu' sight,
My Highland Harry back again.

Sad was the day and sad the hour
He left me on his native plain,
An' rush'd, his sair-wrang'd Prince to join,
But oh, he ne'er cam back again!

Strong was my Harry's arm in war,
Unmatch'd on a' Culloden plain;
But Vengeance mark'd him for his ain,
For oh, he ne'er cam back again!

O for him back again!
The auld Stuarts back again!
I wad gie a' my faither's land
To see them a' come back again.*

BEWARE O' BONIE ANN.

AIR—*Ye Gallants Bright.*

['I composed this song out of compliment to Miss Ann Masterton, the daughter of my friend Allan Masterton, the author of the air "Strathallan's Lament," and two or three others [including "O, Willie brew'd a peck o' maut" *and* "The Braes o' Ballochmyle"] in this work.'—*Burns.* Ann Masterton married a medical man of the name of Derbishire, who resided first in Bath and subsequently in London.]

Ye gallants bright, I rede you right advise
Beware o' bonie Ann;
Her comely face sae fu' o' grace,
Your heart she will trepan: steal
Her een sae bright, like stars by night,
Her skin is like the swan;

* The two closing verses do not appear in Johnson's *Museum*. They are given in a MS. of the song—though not in Burns's hand—now in the British Museum.

Sae jimply lac'd her genty waist, tightly—ladylike, graceful
That sweetly ye might span.

Youth, grace and love attendant move,
And pleasure leads the van:
In a' their charms, and conquering arms,
They wait on bonie Ann.
The captive bands may chain the hands,
But love enslaves the man:
Ye gallants braw, I rede you a'
Beware o' bonie Ann.

JOHN ANDERSON, MY JO.

TUNE—*John Anderson, my Jo.*

[Improved from an old indecent song. Additional verses, by William Reid of Glasgow, appear in *Poetry Original and Selected*, but are worthless.]

John Anderson, my jo, John, love, darling
When we were first acquent,
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonie brow was brent; unwrinkled
But now your brow is beld, John, bald
Your locks are like the snaw;
But blessings on your frosty pow, white head
John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither; climbed
And mony a canty day, John, happy
We've had wi' ane anither;
Now we maun totter down, John:
And hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson, my jo.

THE BATTLE OF SHERRAMOOR.*

TUNE—*Cameron Rant.*

[In this instance Burns has pruned and paraphrased a more diffuse song on the same subject, which is understood to have been the composition of Rev. John Barclay (1734–1798), minister of the Church of Scotland, and founder of a small sect called 'Bereans' or 'Barclayites.']

'O cam ye here the fight to shun,
Or herd the sheep wi' me, man?
Or were ye at the Sherra-moor,
Or did the battle see, man?'
'I saw the battle, sair and teugh,
And reekin-red ran mony a sheugh; ditch
My heart, for fear, gae sough for sough,
To hear the thuds, and see the cluds knocks—clouds
O' Clans frae woods, in tartan duds, clothes
Wha glaum'd at kingdoms three, man. grasped

'The red-coat lads, wi' black cockauds,
To meet them were na slaw, man,
They rush'd and push'd, and blude outgush'd,
And mony a bouk did fa', man: heavy body
The great Argyle led on his files,
I wat they glanc'd for twenty miles,
They hough'd the Clans like nine-pin kyles, nine-pin pieces
They hack'd and hash'd, while braid-swords clash'd,
And thro' they dash'd, and hew'd and smash'd
Till fey men died awa, man. doomed

'But had ye seen the philibegs
And skyrin tartan trews, man, shining, showy—tight-fitting trousers
When in the teeth they dar'd our Whigs
And covenant Trueblues,† man:
In lines extended lang and large,
When baig'nets o'erpower'd the targe, bayonets
And thousands hasten'd to the charge,

* This was written about the time our bard made his tour to the Highlands, 1787.—*Currie.* Gilbert Burns entertained a doubt if the song was by his brother; but for this scepticism we can see no just grounds.

† The Covenanters carried a 'Blue Banner,' and were therefore called 'true blues.'

Wi' Highland wrath they frae the sheath
Drew blades o' death, till, out o' breath,
They fled like frighted dows, man.' doves

'O how deil, Tam, can that be true? in the devil's name
The chace gaed frae the north, man;
I saw mysel they did pursue
The horse-men back to Forth, man;
And at Dunblane, in my ain sight,
They took the brig wi' a their might, bridge
And straught to Stirling wing'd their flight:
But, cursèd lot! the gates were shut;
And mony a huntit, poor Red-coat,
For fear amaist did swarf, man.' almost—swoon

'My sister Kate cam up the gate
Wi' crowdie unto me, man; oatmeal porridge
She swoor she saw some rebels run
Frae Perth and to Dundee, man;
Their left-hand General had nae skill;
The Angus lads had nae gude will
That day their neebors' blude to spill,
For fear, by foes, that they should lose
Their cogs o' brose,* they scar'd at blows
And hameward fast did flee, man.

'They 've lost some gallant gentlemen
Amang the Highland clans, man;
I fear my Lord Panmure is slain,
Or in his en'mies hands, man;
Now wad ye sing this double fight,
Some fell for wrang and some for right;
And mony bade the world gude-night;
Say, pell and mell, wi' muskets' knell
How Tories fell and Whigs to hell
Flew off in frighted bands, man!'

* Basins of hasty-pudding. The phrase was synonymous for means and substance, wealth.

BLOOMING NELLY.*

On a bank of flowers, in a summer day,
For summer lightly drest,
The youthful, blooming Nelly lay,
With love and sleep oppress't;
When Willie, wand'ring thro' the wood,
Who for her favour oft had sued;
He gaz'd, he wish'd, he fear'd, he blush'd,
And trembled where he stood.

Her closèd eyes, like weapons sheath'd,
Were seal'd in soft repose;
Her lip, still as she fragrant breath'd,
It richer dy'd the rose;
The springing lilies, sweetly prest,
Wild-wanton, kiss'd her rival breast;
He gaz'd, he wish'd, he fear'd, he blush'd,
His bosom ill at rest.

Her robes light-waving in the breeze,
Her tender limbs embrace;
Her lovely form, her native ease,
All harmony and grace;
Tumultuous tides his pulses roll,
A faltering, ardent kiss he stole;
He gaz'd, he wish'd, he fear'd, he blush'd,
And sigh'd his very soul.

As flies the partridge from the brake
On fear-inspirèd wings,
So Nelly starting, half-awake,
Away affrighted springs;
But Willie follow'd—as he should,
He overtook her in the wood;
He vow'd, he pray'd, he found the maid
Forgiving all and good.

* The rather 'broad' original of this, by Theobald, finds a place in Ramsay's *Tea-table Miscellany*.

MY HEART'S IN THE HIGHLANDS.

TUNE—*Failte na Miosg.**

[In this song Burns caught up the single streak of poetry which existed in a well-known old stall song entitled 'The Strong Walls of Derry,' and which commences thus:

> The first day I landed, 'twas on Irish ground,
> The tidings came to me from fair Derry town,
> That my love was married, and to my sad wo,
> And I lost my first love by courting too slow.

After many stanzas of similar doggerel, the author breaks out, as under an inspiration, with the one fine verse, which Burns used as a basis for his own beautiful ditty:

> My heart 's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
> My heart 's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;
> A-chasing the deer, and following the roe—
> My heart 's in the Highlands, wherever I go.]

Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the north,
The birth-place of Valour, the country of Worth;
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,
The hills of the Highlands for ever I love.

Chorus—My heart 's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart 's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer;
A-chasing the wild-deer and following the roe,
My heart 's in the Highlands, wherever I go.

Farewell to the mountains high-cover'd with snow;
Farewell to the straths and green vallies below;
Farewell to the forests and wild-hanging woods;
Farewell to the torrents and loud-pouring floods.

* It must not be supposed, from the Gaelic names given as tunes for his songs, that Burns or his neighbours in Ayrshire or Dumfriesshire knew that language. Though some kind of Gaelic seems to have been spoken in the extreme south of Ayrshire till the beginning of the eighteenth century, Kyle, Burns's country, and Nithsdale, were a part of the old Welsh-speaking kingdom of Strathclyde until 'lowland Scotch' or northern English established itself there.

THE BANKS OF NITH.

TUNE—*Robie donna Gorach.*

The Thames flows proudly to the sea,
Where royal cities stately stand;
But sweeter flows the Nith, to me,
Where Comyns ance had high command:
When shall I see that honor'd Land,
That winding Stream I love so dear!
Must wayward Fortune's adverse hand
For ever, ever keep me here?

How lovely, Nith, thy fruitful vales,
Where bounding hawthorns gayly bloom;
And sweetly spread thy sloping dales,
Where lambkins wanton through the broom.
Tho' wandering, now, must be my doom,
Far from thy bonie banks and braes,
May there my latest hours consume,
Amang the friends of early days!

TAM GLEN.

My heart is a-breaking, dear Tittie, sister
Some counsel unto me come len', lend
To anger them a' is a pity—
But what will I do wi' Tam Glen?

I'm thinking, wi' sic a braw fellow handsome
In poortith I might mak a fen': poverty—shift
What care I in riches to wallow,
If I maunna marry Tam Glen! mustn't

There 's Lowrie the laird o' Dumeller—
'Gude-day to you'—brute! he comes ben:
He brags and he blaws o' his siller— money
But when will he dance like Tam Glen!

My Minnie does constantly deave me — mother—pester
And bids me beware o' young men :
They flatter, she says, to deceive me,
But wha can think sae o' Tam Glen !

My daddie says gin I 'll forsake him — if
He 'd gie me gude hunder marks ten :
But, if it 's ordain'd I maun take him, — must
O wha will I get but Tam Glen !

Yestreen at the Valentines' dealing,*
My heart to my mou gied a sten ; — mouth—bound
For thrice I drew ane without failing,
And thrice it was written 'Tam Glen !'

The last Halloween † I was waukin — watching
My droukit sark-sleeve, as ye ken, — wet—sleeve of a garment
His likeness cam up the house staukin, — stalking
And the very grey breeks o' Tam Glen ! ‡ — trousers

Come, counsel, dear Tittie ! don't tarry ;
I 'll gie you my bonie black hen
Gif ye will advise me to marry — If
The lad I loe dearly, Tam Glen.

A statement made by Sir James Stuart-Menteath of Closeburn shows what extraordinary pains Burns took to elaborate and finish his songs. 'There was then living in Closeburn parish a respectable woman, Christina Kirkpatrick, married to a mason named Flint. She had a masculine understanding ; was well acquainted with the old music, the songs and ballads of Scotland ; and having a fine voice and good ear, she sang them remarkably well. At a subsequent time, when the poet's mother lived on a farm which formed part of this estate, she was on intimate terms with Kirsty, to whom, on the removing with her son Gilbert to East Lothian, she gave several little presents ; amongst the rest, the low-seated deal-chair on which she had nursed the poet and the rest of her

* Distributing sweethearts or valentines by lot. † All-Hallow Eve.

‡ See note, *Halloween*, Vol. I., p. 208.

children. This was obligingly presented to me by Kirsty on her death-bed, and it is now in my possession. When Burns dwelt at Ellisland, he was accustomed, after composing any of his beautiful songs, to pay Kirsty a visit, that he might hear them sung by her. He often stopped her in the course of the singing, when he found any word harsh and grating to his ear, and substituted one more melodious and pleasing. From Kirsty's extensive acquaintance with the old Scotch airs, she was frequently able to suggest to the poet music more suitable to the song she was singing than that to which he had set it.' *

Burns was to some extent assisted in the same way by his wife, whose vocal powers and acquaintance with Scottish airs were above the average.

TO MR PETER HILL.

ELLISLAND, *2nd Feb.* 1790.

No! I will not say one word about apologies and excuses for not writing you. I am a poor, damn'd, rascally gauger, condemned to gallop at least 200 miles every week to inspect dirty ponds and yeasty barrels, and where can I find time to write to, or importance to interest, anybody? The upbraidings of my conscience, nay, the upbraidings of my wife, have persecuted me on your account these two or three months past. I wish to God I was a great man, that my correspondence might throw light upon you to let the world see what you really are; and then I would make your fortune without putting my hand in my pocket for you, which, like all other great men, I suppose I would avoid as much as possible. What are you doing and how are you doing? Have you lately seen any of my few friends? What has become of the BOROUGH REFORM? or how is the fate of my poor namesake, Mademoiselle Burns, decided? Which of their grave lordships can lay his hand on his heart and say that he has not taken advantage of such frailty? Nay, if we may judge by near 6000 years' experience, can the world do without such frailty? O Man! but for thee and thy selfish appetites and dishonest artifices, that beauteous form and that once innocent and still ingenuous mind might have shone conspicuous and lovely in the faithful wife and the affectionate mother; and shall the unfortunate sacrifice to thy

* A statement to the like effect was made in a communication of the late Professor Thomas Gillespie, of St Andrews, to the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, December 12, 1829: 'When a school-boy at Wallace-hall Academy, I saw Burns's horse tied by the bridle to the *sneck* of a cottage-door in the neighbourhood of Thornhill, and lingered for some time listening to the songs which, seated in an arm-chair by the fireside, Burns was listening to. Betty (?) Flint was the name of the songstress. She was neither pretty nor witty, but she had a pipe of the most overpowering pitch, and a taste for song. . . . She sang even to us laddies "There 's nae luck about the house," and "Braw, braw lads o' Gala Water," most inimitably.'

pleasures have no claim on thy humanity?* As for those flinty-bosomed, puritanical persecutors of female frailty and persecutors of female charms†—I am quite sober—I am dispassionate—to show that I am so, I shall mend my pen ere I proceed.—It is written 'Thou shalt not take the name of the L—d thy G—d in vain:' so I neither say 'G— curse them!' nor 'G— blast them!' nor 'G— damn them!' but, may Woman curse them! may Woman blast them! may Woman damn them! . . . And when many years and much port and great business have delivered them over to vulture gouts and aspen palsies, then may they be tantalised with the impotent desires, which like ghosts haunt their bosoms, when all their powers to give or receive enjoyment are for ever asleep in the sepulchre of their fathers!!!

Now for business. Our book society owe you still £1, 4s.: a friend of mine will, I suppose, have given you some money for me (It is about £3 10s., or so) from which pay yourself the Monkland Friendly Society's account and likewise Mr Neilson's account, and send me a copy of it. The gentleman that will have given you the money will be Mr Allan Masterton, writing master in Carrubber's Close. I saw lately in a Review some extracts from a new poem called *The Village Curate*, I think:‡ send it me. I want, likewise, a cheap copy of *The World*. Mr Armstrong, the young poet who does me the honor to mention me so kindly in his works, please give him my best thanks for the copy of his

* A woman of the town, who called herself Margaret Burns, but whose real name was Mathews, and who came from Durham, had settled in Edinburgh in 1789. Miss Burns was not twenty when she went to Edinburgh, but her beauty attracted much notice. In August of the year some of her neighbours (in Rose Street) lodged a complaint that 'since Whitsunday last, she and a Miss Sally Sanderson, who were persons of bad character, had kept a very irregular and disorderly house, into which they admit and entertain licentious and profligate persons of both sexes, to the great annoyance of their neighbours and breach of the public peace . . .' The case caused great sensation, and more so when the two defendants were 'banished forth of the city and liberties for ever.' Miss Burns entered an appeal to the Court of Session by presenting a petition to the Lord Ordinary (Dreghorn): this was refused; she reclaimed to the Inner House, and the case was decided in her favour (December 22, 1789). Soon after, Miss Burns's health failed, and she went to Rosslyn, and died there (1792).

† Chief among them was Creech (then a Bailie of the City): he was on the bench when the Burns case was decided. Bailie Creech was greatly annoyed at the decision, and various squibs were circulated at his expense. Among others, it was announced in a London journal that 'Bailie Creech, of literary celebrity in Edinburgh, was about to lead the beautiful and accomplished Miss Burns to the hymeneal altar.' The Bailie was exceedingly wroth, and only abandoned his threatened action against the editor on the promise of a counter-statement being given in next publication. But when it appeared it ran thus: 'In a former number we noticed the intended marriage between Bailie Creech of Edinburgh, and the beautiful Miss Burns of the same place. We have now the authority of that gentleman to say that the proposed marriage is not to take place, matters having been otherwise arranged to the mutual satisfaction of both parties and their respective friends.'

‡ *The Village Curate* (issued anonymously) is reviewed in the *Scots Magazine* for October 1789. The author was James Hurdis (1763–1801), then curate of Burwash, Sussex; appointed in 1791 to the living of Bishopstone; two years later was made professor of poetry in the University of Oxford. *The Village Curate* (his first published work) was favourably received—ran through four editions—and secured for him the friendship of Cowper and Hayley.

book.* I shall write him my first leisure hour. I like his poetry much, but I think his style in prose quite astonishing.

What is become of that veteran in Genius, Wit and B ** dry, Smellie, and his book?† Give him my compliments. Does Mr Graham of Gartmore ever enter your shop now? He is the noblest instance of great talents, great fortune and great worth that ever I saw in conjunction.

Remember me to Mrs Hill; and believe me to be, my dear Sir, ever yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

TO MR WILLIAM NICOL.

ELLISLAND, *Feb.* 9, 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,—That d-mned mare of yours is dead. I would freely have given her price to have saved her: she has vexed me beyond description. Indebted as I was to your goodness beyond what I can ever repay, I eagerly grasped at your offer to have the mare with me. That I might at least shew my readiness in wishing to be grateful, I took every care of her in my power. She was never crossed for riding above half a score of times by me or in my keeping. I drew her in the plough, one of three, for one poor week. I refused fifty-five shillings for her, which was the highest bode I could squeeze for her. I fed her up and had her in fine order for Dumfries fair, when, four or five days before the fair, she was seized with an unaccountable disorder in the sinews or somewhere in the bones of the neck, with a weakness or total want of power in her fillets, and in short, the whole vertebræ of her spine seemed to be diseased and unhinged, and in eight and forty hours, in spite of the two best farriers in the country, she died and be d-mned to her! The farriers said that she had been quite strained in the fillets beyond cure before you had bought her, and that the poor devil, though she might keep a little flesh, had been jaded and quite worn out with fatigue and oppression. While she was with me, she was under my own eye, and I assure you, my much-valued friend, every thing was done for her that could be done, and the accident has vexed me to the heart. In fact, I could not pluck up spirits to write you, on account of the unfortunate business.

There is little new in this country. Our theatrical company, of which you must have heard, leave us in a week. Their merit and character are indeed very great, both on the stage and in private life; not a worthless creature among them; and their encouragement has been accordingly.

* John Armstrong, journalist and poet, born at Leith, 1771; passed through the University of Edinburgh; studied for the Church; removed to London, where he obtained a situation on a newspaper (1790); failing health obliged him to resign, and retire to Leith, where he died, 1797. He published *Juvenile poems, with remarks on poetry, and a dissertation on the best method of punishing and preventing crimes* (Edinburgh, Peter Hill, 1789), when he was a student.

† *The Philosophy of Natural History*, by William Smellie (Edinburgh, Vol. I., 1790; Vol. II. was issued posthumously, 1799).

Their usual run is from eighteen to twenty-five pounds a night: seldom less than the one, and the house will hold no more than the other. There have been repeated instances of sending away six, and eight, and ten pounds in a night, for want of room. A new theatre is to be built by subscription; the first stone is to be laid on Friday first to come. Three hundred guineas have been raised by thirty subscribers, and thirty more might have been got, if wanted. The manager, Mr Sutherland, was introduced to me by a friend from Ayr; and a worthier or cleverer fellow I have rarely met with. Some of our clergy have slipt in by stealth now and then; but they have got up a farce of their own. You must have heard how the Rev. Mr Lawson of Kirkmahoe, seconded by the Rev. Mr Kirkpatrick of Dunscore, and the rest of that faction, have accused, in formal process, the unfortunate and Rev. Mr Heron of Kirkgunzeon, that in ordaining Mr Neilson to the cure of souls in Kirkbean, he, the said Heron, feloniously and treasonably bound the said Neilson to the Confession of Faith '*so far as it is agreeable to reason and the Word of God.*'*

Mrs B. begs to be remembered most gratefully to you. Little Bobby and Frank are charmingly well and healthy. I am jaded to death with fatigue. For these two or three months, on an average, I have not ridden less than two hundred miles per week. I have done little in the poetic way. I have given Mr Sutherland two Prologues, one of which was delivered last week. I have likewise strung four or five barbarous stanzas, to the tune of *Chevy Chase*, by way of Elegy on your poor unfortunate mare, beginning (the name she got here was Peg Nicholson)——†

ELEGY ON WILLIE NICOL'S MARE.

Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare
As ever trode on airn; iron

* Burns here alludes to an unimportant heresy-hunt which had caused some stir in Dumfriesshire before he wrote to Nicol. When his friend Mr Neilson of Kirkbean was ordained, the Rev. James Heron of Kirkgunzeon, who officiated on the occasion, and who was a Moderate, in putting the ordinary questions as to the presentee's adherence to the Confession of Faith, added some such words as the poet has quoted. No notice was taken of this innovation at the time; but at a subsequent meeting, the Rev. Archibald Lawson of Kirkmahoe, who belonged to the Evangelical 'faction,' brought the matter up, and a long discussion followed. At a still later meeting, the Presbytery came to a finding, approving of Mr Lawson's action; acquitting Mr Heron of having done anything censurable, but also disapproving of any alteration in the words of the questions appointed to be put to ministers at ordination. The Presbytery records do not indicate that Burns's minister, Mr Kirkpatrick, took part in the discussion, although he was undoubtedly present. There is a tradition in Dunscore that an angry correspondence passed between the poet and Mr Kirkpatrick on this occasion. Archibald Lawson, son of the minister of Closeburn, was minister of Kirkmahoe from 1750 till his death in 1796; James Heron, son of the minister of Terregles, was minister of Kirkgunzeon from 1786 till his death in 1801. The latter was 'a candid, upright, and benevolent man, of liberal sentiments and sincere piety.'—Scott's *Fasti.*

† In burlesque allusion, it may be presumed, to the insane woman, Margaret Nicholson, who made an attempt to stab George III. with a knife, August 1786.

But now she 's floating down the Nith,
And past the Mouth o' Cairn.*

Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare,
And rode thro' thick and thin ;
But now she 's floating down the Nith,
And wanting even the skin.

Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare,
And ance she bore a priest ;
But now she 's floating down the Nith
For Solway fish a feast.

Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare,
And the priest he rode her sair :
And much oppressed and bruised she was,
——As priest-rid cattle are.†—&c. &c.

My best compliments to Mrs Nicol and little Neddy and all the family. I hope Ned is a good scholar, and will come out to gather nuts and apples with me next harvest. I am ever, my dearest Friend, yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

William Burns had proceeded to Newcastle-on-Tyne, and had procured a situation in the shop of Messrs Walker and Robson, saddlers, Middle Street. He proposed going on to London, and wrote his eldest brother for John Murdoch's address.

WILLIAM BURNS TO ROBERT BURNS.

NEWCASTLE, 24*th Jan.* 1790.

DEAR BROTHER—I wrote you about six weeks ago, and I have expected to hear from you every post since, but I suppose your excise business, which you hinted at in your last, has prevented you from writing. By the bye, when and how have you got into the excise ; and what division have you got about Dumfries? These questions please

* Strictly speaking, it is the Cluden and not the Cairn that flows into the Nith at Lincluden. Cairn offered a tempting rhyme, and its use is not absolutely wrong. The Cairn proper, which for a portion of its course forms one of the boundaries of the parish of Dunscore, is joined below a picturesque fall at what is known as Rauten Bridge by the Auld Water of Cluden. Below the confluence the river takes the name of the smaller stream.

† Nicol, to whom the mare belonged, had been educated for the Scotch ministry.

answer in your next, if more important matter do not occur. But in the mean time let me have the letter to John Murdoch * which Gilbert wrote me you meant to send: inclose it in yours to me, and let me have them as soon as possible, for I intend to sail for London in a fortnight or three weeks at farthest.

You promised me, when I was intending to go to Edinburgh, to write me some instructions about behaviour in companies rather above my station, to which I might be eventually introduced. As I may be introduced into such companies at Murdoch's, or on his account, when I go to London, I wish you would write me some such instructions now: I never had more need of them, for having spent little of my time in company of any sort since I came to Newcastle, I have almost forgot the common civilities of life. To these instructions pray add some of a moral kind, for though (either through the strength of early impressions or the frigidity of my constitution) I have hitherto withstood the temptation to those vices to which young fellows of my station and time of life are so much addicted, yet I do not know if my virtue will be able to withstand the more powerful temptations of the metropolis; yet, through God's assistance and your instructions, I hope to weather the storm.

Give the compliments of the season and my love to my sisters and all the rest of your family. Tell Gilbert, the first time you write him, that I am well and that I will write him either when I sail or when I arrive at London. I am, &c., W. B.

Burns replied in a letter of wholesome confidential advice:

TO MR WILLIAM BURNS.

My dear William—I would have written you sooner, but I have mislaid Mr Murdoch's letter and cannot for my life lay my hand on it; so I cannot write him for want of a Direction. If I find it afterwards, I will write him and inclose it to you in London. Now that you are setting out for that place, put on manly resolve and determine to persevere: and in that case you will less or more be sure of success. One or two things allow me to particularize to you. London swarms with worthless wretches who prey on their fellow-creatures' thoughtlessness or inexperience. Be cautious in forming connections with comrades and companions. You can be pretty good company to yourself, and you cannot be too shy of letting any body know you further than to know you as a Saddler. Another caution: I give you great credit for your sobriety with respect to that universal vice, Bad Women. It is an impulse the hardest to be restrained, but if once a man accustoms himself to gratifications of that impulse, it is then nearly or altogether impossible to restrain it. Wh——g is a most ruinous, expensive species of dissipation: is spending a poor fellow's money with which he ought clothe and support himself — nothing? Wh——g has ninety-nine chances in a hundred to bring on a man the most nauseous and excruciating diseases

* Burns's old tutor, now in London.

to which Human nature is liable; are disease and an impaired constitution trifling considerations? All this independent of the criminality of it.

I have gotten the Excise Division in the middle of which I live. Poor little Frank is this morning at the height in the small-pox. I got him inoculated, and I hope he is in a good way.

Write me before you leave Newcastle, and as soon as you reach London. In a word, if ever you be, as perhaps you may be, in a strait for a little ready cash, you know my direction. I shall not see you beat, while you fight like a Man. Farewell! God bless you! ROBT. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, 10*th February* 1790.

It is not at all improbable that Peter Stuart had again invited Burns to become a contributor to *The Star*, at the same time offering to continue to send the paper regularly. Burns sent a reply in rhyme, which Daniel Stuart long after said was 'a sneering, unhandsome return' for his brother's offer. It is a piece of mere pleasantry, conceived in the purest good-humour and good feeling towards the person addressed:

WRITTEN TO A GENTLEMAN WHO HAD SENT THE POET A NEWSPAPER, AND OFFERED TO CONTINUE IT FREE OF EXPENSE.

Kind Sir—I 've read your paper through,
And faith, to me, 'twas really new!
How guessed ye, Sir, what maist I wanted?
This mony a day I 've grain'd and gaunted — groaned —yawned
To ken what French mischief was brewin
Or what the drumlie Dutch were doin; — dull
That vile doup-skelper, Emperor Joseph,
If Venus yet had got his nose off;
Or how the collieshangie works — contention
Atween the Russians and the Turks;*
Or if the Swede, before he halt,
Would play anither Charles the Twalt;† — Twelfth
If Denmark, any body spak o' 't;
Or Poland, wha had now the tack o' 't; — lease

* Turkey had declared war (1787) against Russia because of arrogant claims by the latter. Austria sided with Russia; the Turks were ultimately defeated and forced to sue for peace (1791).

† Gustavus III. had attracted considerable notice in 1789 by his vigorous (though latterly unsuccessful) measures against Russia, and the arrest of many of his nobility who disapproved of his measures.

How cut-throat Prussian blades were hingin; hanging, dangling
How libbet Italy was singin; eunuch
If Spaniard, Portuguese or Swiss
Were sayin or takin aught amiss;
Or how our merry lads at hame
In Britain's court kept up the game:
How Royal George, the Lord leuk o'er him!
Was managing St Stephen's quorum;
If sleekit Chatham Will was livin, smooth Pitt
Or glaikit Charlie got his nieve in; rash Fox—fist
How daddie Burke the plea was cookin,
If Warren Hastings' neck was yeukin; itching, as a premonition of death on the gallows
How cesses, stents and fees were rax'd, rates—taxes—raised
Or if bare a—— yet were tax'd;
The news o' princes, dukes and earls,
Pimps, sharpers, bawds and opera-girls;
If that daft buckie, Geordie Wales, Prince of Wales
Was threshin still at hizzies' tails; hussies'
Or if he was grown oughtlins douser, any more sedate
And no a perfect kintra cooser: country stallion
A' this and mair I never heard of,
And but for you I might despair'd of:
So, gratefu', back your news I send you,
And pray a' gude things may attend you!

ELLISLAND, *Monday morning*, 1790.

After all, from whatever cause, the gratuitous newspaper did not come very regularly, as appears from a note of remonstrance sent by the poet to headquarters:

Dear Peter, dear Peter,
We poor sons of metre
Are often negleckit, ye ken:
For instance, your sheet, man,
(Though glad I 'm to see 't, man,)
I get it no ae day in ten.—R. B.

The two following songs, which are generally assigned to this period, although it is at least possible they were written some

months later—the first, 'the best love-song I ever composed,' Burns himself said—relate to an incident in his life which is to be lamented, as a serious lapse from conjugal fidelity; the story will be told later:

THE GOWDEN LOCKS OF ANNA.

TUNE—*Banks of Banna.*

Yestreen I had a pint o' wine,*
A place where body saw na;
Yestreen lay on this breast o' mine
The gowden locks of Anna.

The hungry Jew in wilderness,
Rejoicing o'er his manna,
Was naething to my hiney bliss — honey
Upon the lips of Anna.

Ye Monarchs, take the East and West,
Frae Indus to Savannah!
Gie me within my straining grasp,
The melting form of Anna.

There I'll despise Imperial charms:
An Empress or Sultana,
While dying raptures in her arms,
I give and take with Anna!

Awa, thou flaunting God o' Day!
Awa, thou pale Diana!
Ilk Star, gae hide thy twinkling ray — Each
When I'm to meet my Anna

Come in thy raven plumage, Night,
(Sun, Moon and Stars withdrawn a';)
And bring an angel-pen to write
My transports wi' my Anna.

* Referring to 'Anna'—Anne Park, niece of Mrs Hyslop, landlady of the Globe Tavern, Dumfries—Allan Cunningham writes, 'She was accounted beautiful by the customers at the inn, when wine made them tolerant in matters of taste; and, as may be surmised from the song, had other pretty ways to render herself agreeable to them than the serving of wine.'

POSTSCRIPT.

The Kirk an' State may join an' tell
To do sic things I maunna : mustn't
The Kirk an' State may gae to h——,
And I 'll gae to my Anna.

She is the sunshine o' my e'e,
To live but her I canna ; without
Had I on earth but wishes three,
The first should be my Anna.

I MURDER HATE.*

I murder hate by field or flood,
Tho' glory's name may screen us ;
In wars at home I 'll spend my blood,
Life-giving wars of Venus :
The deities that I adore
Are social Peace and Plenty ;
I 'm better pleased *to make one more,*
Than be the death of twenty.

I would not die like Socrates,
For all the fuss of Plato ;
Nor would I with Leonidas ;
Nor yet would I with Cato.
The Zealots of the Church or State
Shall ne'er my mortal foes be,
But let me have bold Zimri's fate,
Within the arms of Cozbi ! †

Alexander Cunningham, of Edinburgh, ever a zealous friend of Burns, had written to him as follows :

* The first eight lines of this song, which was inserted by Burns in the Glenriddel volume immediately after 'The Gowden Locks of Anna,' were inscribed by him with a diamond pen on the window-pane of a bedroom in the Globe Tavern.

† See Numbers xxv. 8-15.

28th January 1790.

In some instances it is reckoned unpardonable to quote any one's own words, but the value I have for your friendship nothing can more truly or more elegantly express than

> Time but the impression stronger makes,
> As streams their channels deeper wear.

Having written to you twice without having heard from you, I am apt to think my letters have miscarried. My conjecture is only framed upon the chapter of accidents turning up against me, as it too often does, in the trivial, and I may with truth add, the more important, affairs of life; but I shall continue occasionally to inform you what is going on among the circle of your friends in these parts. In these days of merriment, I have frequently heard your name *proclaimed* at the jovial board —under the roof of our hospitable friend at Stenhouse-mills; there were no

> Lingering moments number'd with care.

I saw your 'Address to the New-year' in the *Dumfries Journal*. Of your productions I shall say nothing, but my acquaintances allege that when your name is mentioned, which every man of celebrity must know often happens, I am the champion, the Mendoza,* against all snarling critics and narrow-minded reptiles, of whom *a few* on this planet do *crawl*.

With best compliments to your wife and her black-eyed sister, I remain, Yours, &c. A. C.

Burns replied:

TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.

ELLISLAND, 13*th February* 1790.

I beg your pardon, my dear and much-valued friend, for writing to you on this very unfashionable, unsightly sheet—

> My poverty but not my will consents.

But to make amends, since of modish post I have none, except one poor widowed half-sheet of gilt, which lies in my drawer among my plebeian foolscap pages, like the widow of a man of fashion, whom that unpolite scoundrel, Necessity, has driven from Burgundy and Pine-apple to a dish of Bohea with the scandal-bearing help-mate of a village priest or a glass of whisky-toddy with the ruby-nosed yoke-fellow of a foot-padding exciseman—I make a vow to inclose this sheet-full of epistolary fragments in that, my only scrap of gilt-paper.

* Mendoza—'the name of an illustrious family that throughout Spanish history distinguished itself wherever distinction was to be won—in war, statesmanship, diplomacy, the Church and literature.'

I am indeed your unworthy debtor for three friendly letters. I ought to have written to you long ere now, but it is a literal fact, I have scarcely a spare moment. It is not that I *will not* write to you: Miss Burnet * is not more dear to her guardian angel, nor his grace the Duke of Queensberry to the powers of darkness, than my friend Cunningham to me. It is not that I *cannot* write to you: should you doubt it, take the following fragment, which was intended for you some time ago, and be convinced that I can *antithesize* sentiment and *circumvolute* periods as well as any coiner of phrase in the regions of philology,

December 1789.

My dear Cunningham—Where are you? And what are you doing? Can you be that son of levity who takes up a friendship as he takes up a fashion; or are you, like some other of the worthiest fellows in the world, the victim of indolence, laden with fetters of ever-increasing weight?

What strange beings we are! Since we have a portion of conscious existence, equally capable of enjoying pleasure, happiness and rapture, or of suffering pain, wretchedness and misery, it is surely worthy of an inquiry, whether there be not such a thing as a science of life; whether method, economy and fertility of expedients be not applicable to enjoyment; and whether there be not a want of dexterity in pleasure, which renders our little scantling of happiness still less, and a profuseness, an intoxication in bliss, which leads to satiety, disgust and self-abhorrence. There is not a doubt but that health, talents, character, decent competency, respectable friends, are real, substantial blessings, and yet do we not daily see those who enjoy many or all of these good things, contrive, notwithstanding, to be as unhappy as others to whose lot few of them have fallen? I believe one great source of this mistake or misconduct is owing to a certain stimulus, with us called ambition, which goads us up the hill of life, not as we ascend other eminences, for the laudable curiosity of viewing an extended landscape, but rather for the dishonest pride of looking down on others of our fellow-creatures, seemingly diminutive in humbler stations, &c. &c.

Sunday, 14th February 1790.

God help me! I am now obliged to

Join night to day, and Sunday to the week.

If there be any truth in the orthodox faith of these churches, I am d——d past redemption, and, what is worse, d——d to all eternity. I am deeply read in Boston's *Four-fold State*, Marshall *On Sanctification*, Guthrie's *Trial of a Saving Interest*, &c., &c.,† but 'There is no balm in

* See Vol. II., p. 24.

† *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*, by Rev. Thomas Boston (1720); *The Gospel-mystery of Sanctification opened*, by Rev. Walter Marshall (1692); *The Christian's Great Interest*: in two parts: I. The trial of a saving interest in Christ. II. The way to attain it, by Rev. William Guthrie (*circa* 1658).

Gilead, there is no physician there' for me; so I shall e'en turn Arminian and trust to 'Sincere though imperfect obedience.'

Tuesday, 16*th*.

Luckily for me I was prevented from the discussion of the knotty point at which I had just made a full stop. All my fears and cares are of this world: if there is another, an honest man has nothing to fear from it. I hate a man that wishes to be a Deist; but I fear every fair, unprejudiced inquirer must in some degree be a Sceptic. It is not that there are any very staggering arguments against the immortality of man; but, like electricity, phlogiston, &c., the subject is so involved in darkness, that we want data to go upon. One thing frightens me much: that we are to live for ever seems *too good news to be true*. That we are to enter into a new scene of existence, where, exempt from want and pain, we shall enjoy ourselves and our friends without satiety or separation—how much should I be indebted to any one who could fully assure me that this was certain!

> [Tell us, ye dead! will none of you in pity
> To those you left behind, reveal the secret,
> What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be!]

My time is once more expired. I will write to Mr Cleghorn soon. God bless him and all his concerns! And may all the powers that preside over conviviality and friendship be present with all their kindest influence when the bearer of this, Mr Syme, and you meet! I wish I could also make one. I think we should be Trinity in Unity.

Finally, brethren, farewell! Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are gentle, whatsoever things are charitable, whatsoever things are kind, think on these things,* and think on

ROBERT BURNS.

TO MR PETER HILL.

ELLISLAND, 2*nd March* 1790.

MY DEAR SIR—At a late meeting of the Monkland Friendly Society, it was resolved to augment the Library by the following books, which you are to send us as soon as possible:—*The Mirror*, *The Lounger*, *Man of Feeling*, *Man of the World* (these, for my own sake, I wish to have by the first carrier), Knox's *History of the Reformation*, Rae's *History of the Rebellion in* 1715, any good *History of the Rebellion*, 1745, *A Display of the Secession Act and Testimony*, by Mr Gib, Hervey's *Meditations*, Beveridge's *Thoughts*, and another copy of Watson's *Body of Divinity*. This last heavy performance is so much admired by many of our members, that they will not be content with one copy; so Captain Riddel, our president and patron, agreed with me to give you private instructions

* Compare Philippians iv. 8.

not to send *Watson*, but to say that you could not procure a copy of the book so cheap as the one you sent formerly, and therefore, you wait further orders.

I wrote to Mr A. Masterton three or four months ago, to pay some money he owed me into your hands, and lately I wrote to you to the same purpose, but I have heard from neither one nor other of you.

In addition to the books I commissioned in my last, I want very much *An Index to the Excise Laws, or an Abridgement of all the Statutes now in force relative to the Excise*, by Jelinger Symons. I want three copies of this book; if the book is now to be had, cheap or dear, get it for me. An honest country neighbour of mine wants, too, a Family Bible, the larger the better, but second-handed, for he does not chuse to give above ten shillings for the book. I want likewise for myself, as you can pick them up, second-handed or anything cheap, copies of Otway's Dramatic Works, Ben Johnson's *Do.*, Dryden's, Congreve's, Wycherley's, Vanbrugh's, Cibber's, or any dramatic works of the more modern Macklin, Garrick, Foote, Colman or Sheridan. A good copy, too, of Molière, in French, I much want. Any other good French dramatic authors in their native language, I want these: I mean comic authors chiefly, though I should wish Racine, Corneille and Voltaire too. I am in no hurry for all, or any, of these, but if you accidentally meet with them very cheap, get them for me.

And now, to quit the dry walk of business, how do you do, my dear friend, and how is Mrs Hill? I trust, if now and then not so *elegantly* handsome, at least as amiable, and sings as divinely as ever. My Goodwife too has a charming 'wood-note wild;' now, could we four get anyway snugly together in a corner, in the New Jerusalem (remember, I bespeak your company there), you and I, though Heaven knows we are no singers, yet, as we are all to have harps, you know, we shall continue to support the ladies' pipes, as we have oft done before, with all the powers of our instruments.

I am out of all patience with this vile world for one thing. Mankind are by nature benevolent creatures, except in a few scoundrelly instances. I do not think that avarice of the good things we chance to have is born with us, but we are placed here amid so much nakedness and hunger, and poverty and want, that we are under a damning necessity of studying selfishness, in order that we may EXIST! Still there are, in every age, a few souls that all the wants and woes of life cannot debase to selfishness or even give the necessary alloy of caution and prudence. If ever I am in danger of vanity, it is when I contemplate myself on this side of my disposition and character. God knows I am no saint: I have a whole host of follies and sins to answer for; but if I could (and I believe I do it as far as I can), I would 'wipe away all tears from all eyes.' Even the knaves who have injured me, I would oblige them; though, to tell the truth, it would be more out of vengeance, to shew them that I was independent of and above them, than out of the overflowings of my benevolence. Adieu! ROBT. BURNS.

This letter to Hill is exceptionally interesting for the frankness of its author's self-revelation. Burns feels so intensely the hateful character of selfishness that he cannot help priding himself on his want of the alloy of caution and prudence. His sense of 'sin' is heavy, but it is lightened by the consciousness of a boundless philanthropy. And yet, he would benefit the knaves of the earth only to shew his sense of superiority over them; his creed may compel him to love, but not to like his enemies. It is interesting to notice how, in his communications to the precise and somewhat conventionally pious Mrs Dunlop, the caution or at least the worldly tact which he disclaimed laid a restraint upon his pen. Thus it is that in a single page we have the poet almost unconsciously revealing his 'vanity' and his benevolence, his abjuration of and his bondage to prudence. At the same time it should never be forgotten that Burns took an artistic pride in his letters as well as in his verses and in the skill with which he adapted himself to his company and his correspondents.

WILLIAM BURNS TO ROBERT BURNS.

LONDON, 21*st March* 1790.

DEAR BROTHER—I have been here three weeks come Tuesday, and would have written you sooner, but was not settled in a place of work. We were ten days on our passage from Shields; the weather being calm, I was not sick, except one day when it blew pretty hard. I got into work the Friday after I came to town; I wrought there only eight days, their job being done. I got work again in a shop in the Strand, the next day after I left my former master. It is only a temporary place, but I expect to be settled soon in a shop to my mind, although it will be a harder task than I at first imagined, for there are such swarms of fresh hands just come from the country that the town is quite overstocked, and except one is a particularly good workman (which you know I am not, nor, I am afraid, ever will be) it is hard to get a place: However, I don't yet despair to bring up my lee-way, and shall endeavour if possible to sail within three or four points of the wind. The encouragement here is not what I expected, wages being very low in proportion to the expense of living, but yet, if I can only lay by the money that is spent by others in my situation in dissipation and riot, I expect soon to return you the money I borrowed of you and live comfortably besides.

In the mean time, I wish you would send up all my best linen shirts to

London, which you may easily do by sending them to some of your Edinburgh friends, to be shipped from Leith. Some of them are too little; don't send any but what are good, and I wish one of my sisters could find as much time as to trim my shirts at the breast, for there is no such thing to be seen here as a plain shirt, even for wearing, which is what I want these for. I mean to get one or two new shirts here for Sundays, but I assure you that linen here is a very expensive article. I am going to write to Gilbert to send me an Ayrshire cheese; if he can spare it he will send it to you, and you may send it with the shirts, but I expect to hear from you before that time. The cheese I could get here; but I will have a pride in eating Ayrshire cheese in London, and the expense of sending it will be little, as you are sending the shirts any how.

I write this by J. Stevenson, in his lodgings, while he is writing to Gilbert. He is well and hearty, which is a blessing to me as well as to him. We were at Covent Garden chapel this forenoon, to hear the *Calf** preach; he is grown very fat and is as boisterous as ever. There is a whole colony of Kilmarnock people here, so we don't want for acquaintance.

Remember me to my sisters and all the family. I shall give you all the observations I have made on London in my next, when I shall have seen more of it. I am, dear Brother, yours, &c., W. B.†

The following letter is remarkable for the confession it contains, that he felt high endowments to be a disqualification for the common struggles of the world. It also expresses the strong dislike which Burns, like Scott, entertained for the substitution of 'English' for 'British,' as indicating a deliberate attempt to represent the Union as the absorption of the smaller kingdom by the larger, not a strictly independent alliance between the two—a dislike which even at the present day is frequently manifested north of the Tweed.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 10*th April* 1790.

I have just now, my ever-honored friend, enjoyed a very high luxury in reading a paper of the *Lounger*. You know my national prejudices. I had often read and admired the *Spectator*, *Adventurer*, *Rambler* and *World;* but still with a certain regret that they were so thoroughly and entirely English. Alas! have I often said to myself, what are all the boasted advantages which my country reaps from the Union

* The *Calf*—Rev. James Steven. See Vol. I., pp. 397, 398.

† This is the last of the letters which passed between the brothers which has been recovered.

that can counterbalance the annihilation of her Independence and even her very name! I often repeat that couplet of my favorite poet, Goldsmith—

—— States of native liberty possest,
Tho' very poor, may yet be very blest.

Nothing can reconcile me to the common terms 'English ambassador, English court,' &c. And I am out of all patience to see that equivocal character, Hastings, impeached by 'the Commons of England.' Tell me, my friend, is this weak prejudice? I believe, in my conscience, such ideas as 'my country; her independence; her honor; the illustrious names that mark the history of my native land,' &c.—I believe these, among your *men of the world*, men who in fact guide for the most part and govern our world, are looked on as so many modifications of wrong-headedness. They know the use of bawling out such terms, to rouse or lead THE RABBLE, but for their own private use, with almost all the *able statesmen* that ever existed, or now exist, when they talk of right and wrong, they only mean proper and improper; and their measure of conduct is not what they OUGHT, but what they DARE. For the truth of this I shall not ransack the history of nations, but appeal to one of the ablest judges of men, and himself one of the ablest men that ever lived—the celebrated Earl of Chesterfield. In fact, a man who could thoroughly control his vices whenever they interfered with his interests and who could completely put on the appearance of every virtue as often as it suited his purpose is, on the Stanhopian * plan, the *perfect man:* a man to lead nations. But are great abilities, complete without a flaw and polished without a blemish, the standard of human excellence? This is certainly the staunch opinion of *men of the world;* but I call on honor, virtue and worth, to give the Stygian doctrine a loud negative! However, this must be allowed, that if you abstract from man the idea of an existence beyond the grave, *then* the true measure of human conduct is *proper* and *improper:* Virtue and vice, as dispositions of the heart, are, in that case, of scarcely the same import and value to the world at large, as harmony and discord in the modifications of sound; and a delicate sense of honor, like a nice ear for music, though it may sometimes give the possessor an ecstasy unknown to the coarser organs of the herd, yet, considering the harsh gratings and inharmonic jars, in this ill-tuned state of being, it is odds but the individual would be as happy, and certainly would be as much respected by the true judges of society, as it would then stand, without either a good ear or a good heart.

You must know I have just met with the *Mirror* and *Lounger* for the first time, and I am quite in raptures with them; I should be glad to have your opinion of some of the papers. The one I have just read, *Lounger*, No. 61, has cost me more honest tears than any thing I have read of a long time.† Mackenzie has been called the Addison of the

* Stanhope was the Earl of Chesterfield's family name.

† This paper relates to attachments between servants and masters, and concludes with the story of Albert Bane.

Scots, and, in my opinion, Addison would not be hurt at the comparison. If he has not Addison's exquisite humour, he as certainly outdoes him in the tender and the pathetic. His *Man of Feeling* (but I am not counsel-learned in the laws of criticism) I estimate as the first performance of the kind I ever saw. From what book, moral or even pious, will the susceptible young mind receive impressions more congenial to humanity and kindness, generosity and benevolence—in short, more of all that ennobles the soul to herself or endears her to others—than from the simple, affecting tale of poor Harley?

Still, with all my admiration of Mackenzie's writings, I do not know if they are the fittest reading for a young man who is about to set out, as the phrase is, to make his way into life. Do not you think, Madam, that among the few favored of Heaven in the structure of their minds (for such there certainly are) there may be a purity, a tenderness, a dignity, an elegance of soul, which are of no use, nay, in some degree absolutely disqualifying, for the truly important business of making a man's way into life? If I am not much mistaken, my gallant young friend, Anthony, is very much under these disqualifications; and for the young females of a family I could mention, well may they excite parental solicitude, for I, a common acquaintance, or, as my vanity will have it, an humble friend, have often trembled for a turn of mind which may render them eminently happy—or peculiarly miserable!

I have been manufacturing some verses lately; but as I have got the most hurried season of excise business over, I hope to have more leisure to transcribe any thing that may show how much I have the honor to be, Madam, Yours, &c. R. B.

TO DR JOHN MOORE.

Dumfries, Excise-Office, 14*th July* 1790.

Sir—Coming into town this morning to attend my duty in this office, it being collection-day, I met with a gentleman who tells me he is on his way to London; so I take the opportunity of writing to you, as franking is at present under a temporary death. I shall have some snatches of leisure through the day, amid our horrid business and bustle, and I shall improve them as well as I can, but let my letter be as stupid as * * * * * * * * *, as miscellaneous as a news-paper, as short as a hungry grace-before-meat or as long as a law-paper in the Douglas cause; as ill-spelt as country John's billet-doux or as unsightly a scrawl as Betty Byre-mucker's answer to it, I hope, considering circumstances, you will forgive it; and as it will put you to no expense of postage, I shall have the less reflection about it.

I am sadly ungrateful in not returning you my thanks for your most valuable present, *Zeluco*. In fact, you are in some degree blameable for my neglect. You were pleased to express a wish for my opinion of the work,

which so flattered me that nothing less would serve my overweening fancy than a formal criticism on the book. In fact, I have gravely planned a comparative view of you, Fielding, Richardson and Smollett, in your different qualities and merits as novel-writers. This, I own, betrays my ridiculous vanity, and I may probably never bring the business to bear; but I am fond of the spirit young Elihu shews in the book of Job—'And I said, I will also declare my opinion.' I have quite disfigured my copy of the book with my annotations. I never take it up without at the same time taking my pencil and marking with asterisms, parentheses, &c., wherever I meet with an original thought, a nervous remark on life and manners, a remarkably well-turned period or a character sketched with uncommon precision.

Though I shall hardly think of fairly writing out my 'Comparative view,' I shall certainly trouble you with my remarks, such as they are. I have just received from my gentleman that horrid summons in the book of Revelations—'that time shall be no more!'

The little collection of sonnets have same charming poetry in them. If *indeed* I am indebted to the fair author for the book,* and not, as I rather suspect, to a celebrated author of the other sex, I should certainly have written to the lady, with my grateful acknowledgments and my own ideas of the comparative excellence of her pieces. I would do this last, not from any vanity of thinking that my remarks could be of much consequence to Mrs Smith, but merely from my own feelings as an author, doing as I would be done by. R. B.

The canvass for the Dumfries burghs was vigorously prosecuted, and when the election at length took place on 12th July, there was unprecedented excitement in the district, although fortunately no outrage was committed such as characterised the election of Sir Robert Lawrie for Dumfriesshire. The influence of the Duke of Queensberry on the Whig side overbore the merits of the excellent 'Westerhall,' and his dismissal from the bedchamber was revenged on Pitt by the return of Captain Miller. The *Caledonian Mercury* of 15th July recorded that 'The Election of the burghs of Dumfries-shire and Kirkcudbright was more contested than any election remembered in Scotland. In the end, the legal delegates for Annan and Lochmaben declared for Sir James Johnstone; those for Dumfries, Sanquhar and Kirkcudbright for Captain Miller, younger of Dalswinton, who is returned the member of Parliament. But Mr Birtwhistle, who lost his election as delegate for Kirkcudbright by one voice, it is said, is to bring that election under review, and that the

* *Elegaic sonnets and other essays*, by Charlotte Smith. (Vol. I. Chichester, 1784.)

contest is to end before the House of Commons. The number of people assembled at Dumfries was beyond anything ever seen at that place, but no disturbance happened.'

In a spirited verse-epistle on the subject, addressed to his friend Graham, Burns shows, under an affected impartiality, his Tory and even Cavalier leanings:

SECOND EPISTLE TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY, ON THE ELECTION FOR THE DUMFRIES STRING OF BOROUGHS, ANNO 1790.

Fintry, my stay in worldly strife,
Friend o' my Muse, Friend o' my Life,
  Are ye as idle 's I am?
Come then, wi' uncouth, kintra fleg — country vagary
O'er Pegasus I 'll fling my leg,
  And ye shall see me try him.

But where shall I go rin a ride, — run
That I may splatter nane beside? — splash
  I wad na be uncivil:
In manhood's various paths and ways
There 's ay some doytin body strays, — stupid person
  And *I* ride like the devil.

Thus I break aff wi' a' my birr, — with all my dash
An' down yon dark, deep alley spur,
  Where Theologics daunder: — stroll
Alas! curst wi' eternal fogs,
And damn'd in everlasting bogs,
  As sure 's the creed I 'll blunder!

I 'll stain a band or jaup a gown — splash
Or rin my reckless, guilty crown
  Against the haly door:* — holy
Sair do I rue my luckless fate
When, as the Muse an' Deil wad hae 't,
  I rade that road before.

* Minister's pulpit-gown and bands. Burns means that he will attack the clergy.

Suppose I take a spurt, and mix
Amang the wilds o' Politics—
Elector and elected,
Where dogs at Court (sad sons of bitches!)
Septennially a madness touches,
Till all the land 's infected.

All hail! Drumlanrig's haughty Grace,
Discarded remnant of a race
Once godlike—great in story;
Thy forbears' virtues all contrasted, forefathers
The very name of Douglas blasted,
Thine that inverted glory!

Hate, envy, oft the Douglas bore,
But thou hast superadded more,
And sunk them in contempt;
Follies and crimes have stain'd the name,
But, Queensberry, thine the virgin claim
From aught that 's good exempt!

I 'll sing the zeal Drumlanrig * bears
Who left the all-important cares
Of princes and their darlings;
And, bent on winning borough-towns,
Cam shaking hands wi' wabster-louns, weavers
And kissin barefit carlins. † barefooted hussies

Combustion thro' our Boroughs rode,
Whistling his roaring pack abroad
Of mad, unmuzzled lions;
As Queensberry Buff and Blue ‡ unfurled,
And Westerha' and Hopetoun § hurled
To every Whig defiance.

* The Duke of Queensberry ('Old Q') was also Earl of Drumlanrig and Sanquhar.

† Compare this verse with the last paragraph of Burns's letter of 20th December 1789 to Provost Maxwell of Lochmaben.

‡ The livery of Fox.

§ James, third Earl of Hopetoun (1741–1817), then one of the sixteen representative peers of Scotland. In 1809 he was created Baron Hopetoun of Hopetoun.

But cautious Queensberry left the war—
Th' unmanner'd dust might soil his Star,
Besides, he hated *Bleeding:*
But left behind him heroes bright,
Heroes in Cæsarean fight
Or Ciceronian pleading.

O for a throat like huge Mons-Meg,*
To muster o'er each ardent Whig
Beneath Drumlanrig's banner!
Heroes and heroines commix,
All in the field of Politics,
To win immortal honor.

M'Murdo † and his lovely spouse
(Th' enamour'd laurels kiss her brows!)
Led on the Loves and Graces:
She won each gaping Burgess' heart,
While he, sub rosa, play'd his part
Among their wives and lasses.

Craigdarroch‡ led a light-arm'd core, corps
Tropes, metaphors and figures pour
Like Hecla streaming thunder:
Glenriddel,§ skill'd in rusty coins,
Blew up each Tory's dark designs,
And bar'd the treason under.

In either wing two champions fought:
Redoubted Staig,‖ who set at nought
The wildest savage Tory;
While Welsh,¶ who never flinch'd his ground,
High-wav'd his magnum-bonum ** round
With Cyclopean fury.

* A piece of ordnance of extraordinary size (for its time), made in the reign of James IV. of Scotland, about the end of the fifteenth century, and still exhibited in Edinburgh Castle. The diameter of the bore is twenty inches.

† The duke's chamberlain.

‡ Alexander Fergusson of Craigdarroch, victor in the Whistle-contest.

§ Riddel of Glenriddel.

‖ The Provost of Dumfries.

¶ Sheriff of the county.

** Magnum-bonum is the trade name for a large-sized barrel-pen.

Miller * brought up th' artillery ranks,
The many-pounders of the Banks,
Resistless desolation!
While Maxwelton,† that baron bold,
'Mid Lawson's‡ port entrench'd his hold,
And threaten'd worse damnation.

To these what Tory hosts oppos'd,
With these what Tory warriors clos'd,
Surpasses my descriving:
Squadrons, extended long and large,
With furious speed rush to the charge,
Like furious devils driving.

What Verse can sing or Prose narrate
The butcher deeds of bloody Fate
Amid this mighty tulyie! conflict
Grim horror girn'd, pale Terror roar'd, scowled
As Murder at his thrapple shor'd, throat—threatened
And Hell mix'd in the brulyie. broil

As Highland craigs by thunder cleft,
When lightnings fire the stormy lift, firmament
Hurl down with crashing rattle;
As flames among a hundred woods,
As headlong foam a hundred floods,
Such is the rage of battle.

The stubborn Tories dare to die;
As soon the rooted oaks would fly
Before th' approaching fellers:
The Whigs come on like ocean's roar
When all his wintry billows pour
Against the Buchan Bullers.§

* Patrick Miller of Dalswinton, father of the Whig candidate. He had, as has already been noted, been a banker in Edinburgh.

† Sir Robert Lawrie, of Maxwelton, M.P. for Dumfriesshire.

‡ Lawson—a local wine-merchant.

§ The 'Bullers of Buchan' is a shaft or well in the rocks on the Aberdeenshire coast, near Peterhead—having an opening to the sea at the bottom. The sea, raging in it at certain states of the tide, gives it the appearance of a pot or boiler: hence the name.

Lo, from the shades of Death's deep night,
Departed Whigs enjoy the fight,
And think on former daring:
The muffled Murtherer of Charles *
The Magna Charta flag unfurls—
All deadly gules its bearing. red in blazonry

Nor wanting ghosts of Tory fame:
Bold Scrimgeour † follows gallant Graham; ‡
Auld Covenanters shiver!
Forgive! forgive! much-wrong'd Montrose!
Now Death and Hell engulph thy foes,
Thou liv'st on high for ever.

Still o'er the field the combat burns:
The Tories, Whigs, give way by turns;
But Fate the word has spoken:
For Woman's wit and strength o' Man,
Alas! can do but what they can—
The Tory ranks are broken.

O that my een were flowing burns! eyes—brooks
My voice, a lioness that mourns
Her darling cubs' undoing!
That I might greet, that I might cry, weep
While Tories fall, while Tories fly
From furious Whigs pursuing!

What Whig but melts for good Sir James—
Dear to his Country, by the names
Friend, Patron, Benefactor!
Not Pulteney's wealth can Pulteney save; §
And Hopetoun falls, the generous, brave;
And Stewart, bold as Hector. ||

* 'Charles I. was executed by a man in a mask.'—*R. B.*

† John Scrimgeour, third Viscount Dudhope; fought with Charles II. at Worcester. Made Earl of Dundee at the Restoration, and died 1668, without issue, when the title became extinct.

‡ John Graham, the great Marquis of Montrose.

§ Sir James Johnstone's younger brother, William (afterwards fifth baronet of Westerhall), had married Frances Pulteney, and through her acquired the vast estates of William Pulteney, Earl of Bath, the eminent statesman. Sir William Johnstone is said to have been one of the richest men in the British empire on his death in 1805.

|| Stuart of Hillside.

Thou, Pitt, shalt rue this overthrow,
And Thurlow growl a curse of woe,
And Melville melt in wailing:
How Fox and Sheridan rejoice!
And Burke shall sing 'O Prince, arise!
Thy power is all-prevailing!'

For your poor friend, the Bard, afar
He only hears and sees the war,
A cool Spectator purely!
So, when the storm the forest rends,
The Robin in the hedge descends,
And sober chirps securely.

Now, for my friends' and brethren's sakes,
And for my native Land o' Cakes,
I pray with holy fire:
Lord, send a rough-shod troop o' Hell
O'er a' wad Scotland buy or sell, who would
And grind them in the mire!!!

R. B.

TO MR JOHN MURDOCH, TEACHER OF FRENCH, LONDON.*

My dear Sir—I received a letter from you a long time ago, but unfortunately, as it was in the time of my peregrinations and journeyings through Scotland, I mislaid or lost the letter, and, by consequence, your direction along with it. Luckily, my good star brought me acquainted with Mr Kennedy,† who, I understand, is an acquaintance of yours; and by his means and mediation I hope to replace that link which my unfortunate negligence had so unluckily broke in the chain of our correspondence. I was the more vexed at the vile accident, as my brother William, a journeyman Saddler, has been for some time in London, and wished above all things for your direction, that he might have paid his respects to his Father's Friend. His last Address he sent me was 'Wm. Burns, at

* Collated with the MS., now in the National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.

† It is uncertain who this Kennedy was. He may have been the Thomas Kennedy who communicated Burns's epitaph on 'Tam the Chapman' to William Cobbett, who printed it in his magazine, and who described his contributor as 'an aged person resident in London.' He professed to have known Burns when he was a boy, and may have been an acquaintance of Murdoch.

Mr Barber's, Saddler, No. 181 Strand.' I write him by Mr Kennedy, but I neglected to ask him for your Address; so, if you find a spare half-minute, please let my brother know by a card where and when he will find you, and the poor fellow will joyfully wait on you as one of the few surviving friends of the Man whose Name, and Christian Name too, he has the honor to bear.

Next letter I write you shall be a long one. I have much to tell you of 'hairbreadth 'scapes in th' imminent deadly breach,' with all the eventful history of a life the early years of which owed so much to your kind tutorage: but this at an hour of leisure. My kindest Compliments to Mrs Murdoch and family. I am ever, My dear Sir, your obliged friend, ROBT. BURNS.*

ELLISLAND, *near Dumfries, July 16th*, 1790.

The elegy that follows was on an Edinburgh friend who had died in the winter of 1788. Matthew Henderson† was a man

* 'This letter was communicated to the editor [Cromek] by a gentleman, to whose liberal advice and information he is much indebted—Mr John Murdoch, the tutor of the poet—accompanied by the following interesting note:

"LONDON, HART STREET, BLOOMSBURY, *28th Dec.* 1807.

"DEAR SIR—The following letter, which I lately found among my papers, I copy for your perusal, partly because it is Burns's, partly because it makes honourable mention of my rational Christian friend, his father; and likewise because it is rather flattering to myself. I glory in no one thing so much as an intimacy with good men—the friendship of others reflects no honour. When I recollect the pleasure—and I hope benefit—I received from the conversation of WILLIAM BURNS, especially when on the Lord's Day we walked together for about two miles to the house of prayer, there publicly to adore and praise the Giver of all good, I entertain an ardent hope that together we shall 'renew the glorious theme in distant worlds,' with powers more adequate to the mighty subject—THE EXUBERANT BENEFICENCE OF THE GREAT CREATOR. But to the letter:

[Here follows the letter relative to young William Burns.]

"I promised myself a deal of happiness in the conversation of my dear young friend; but my promises of this nature generally prove fallacious. Two visits were the utmost that I received. At one of them, however, he repeated a lesson which I had given him about twenty years before, when he was a mere child, concerning the pity and tenderness due to animals. To that lesson, which it seems was brought to the level of his capacity, he declared himself indebted for almost all the philanthropy he possessed.

"Let not parents and teachers imagine that it is needless to talk seriously to children. They are sooner fit to be reasoned with than is generally thought. Strong and indelible impressions are to be made before the mind be agitated and ruffled by the numerous train of distracting cares and unruly passions, whereby it is frequently rendered almost unsusceptible of the principles and precepts of rational religion and sound morality.

"But I find myself digressing again. Poor William: then in the bloom and vigour of youth, caught a putrid fever, and in a few days, as real chief-mourner, I followed his remains to the land of forgetfulness. "JOHN MURDOCH."'

† He is described in the Burial Register of Greyfriars' Church, in the graveyard of which he lies, as 'Captain Matthew Henderson of Tannochside; buried 27th Nov. 1788.' He had on the death of his father, David Henderson, succeeded both to the estate of Tannochside in Lanarkshire and to Tannoch in Ayrshire. Financial embarrassments, however, caused

about town, a kind-hearted epicurean, whose agreeable manners made him welcome at tables better furnished than his own, and who was celebrated as being, in the language of James Boswell, who knew him, as 'very happy in uncommon wild sallies.' Allan Cunningham states, on the authority of Sir Thomas Wallace, who is represented as having known him, 'that he dined regularly at Fortune's Tavern, and was a member of the Capillaire* Club, which was composed of all who inclined to be witty and joyous.' A private letter, written in Edinburgh in February 1787, besides alluding to Burns as the lion of the day, mentions several gentlemen who had been spoken of as fit to undertake the Mastership of Ceremonies at the Assemblies. 'I heard of two or three people as being mentioned by others, who never, I daresay, thought of it for themselves—as, for instance, Haggart and *Matthew Henderson.* Would Matthew leave his friend and bottle to go bow at an Assembly?'† He had been one of Burns's friends in Edinburgh, doubtless when they both lived in St James's Square, and appears as a subscriber for four copies of the second edition of the poems—not, however, as *Captain* Matthew Henderson—but as 'Matthew Henderson, Esq.'

TO MR ROBERT CLEGHORN.

ELLISLAND, 23*d July* 1790.

Do not ask me, my Dear Sir, why I have neglected so long to write you. Accuse me of indolence, my line of life, of hurry, my stars of perverseness—in short, accuse me of anything but forgetfulness. You knew Matthew Henderson. At the time of his death I composed an elegaic stanza or two, as he was a man I much regarded; but something came in my way, so that the design of an Elegy to his memory I gave up. Meeting with the fragment the other day among some old waste papers, I tried to finish the Piece, and have this moment put the last hand to it. This I am going to write you is the first fair copy of it.

by luxurious living in Edinburgh, compelled him to part with his estates, as well as with certain tenements at the head of Carrubber's Close, Edinburgh, and when Burns knew him his chief means of subsistence was a pension of £300 from Government. In his youth he had served as a lieutenant in the Earl of Home's Regiment, but had obtained a Civil Service appointment of some value, which he held till his retirement. He was fifty-one at the time of his death.

* Capillaire was a syrup flavoured with maidenhair fern (*Capillus-Veneris*).

† The letter, which was written by Mr Macdonald (W.S.) of St Martin's, to his client, Skene of Skene, is printed entire in the *Scottish Journal*, Dec. 11, 1847.

ELEGY ON CAPTAIN MATTHEW HENDERSON,

A GENTLEMAN WHO HELD THE PATENT FOR HIS HONOURS IMMEDIATELY FROM ALMIGHTY GOD!*

'Should the poor be flattered?'—SHAKESPEARE.†

O Death! thou tyrant fell and bloody!
The meikle devil wi' a woodie — halter
Haurl thee hame to his black smiddie — Drag—smithy
O'er hurcheon hides, — hedgehog
And like stock-fish come o'er his studdie — strike—anvil
Wi' thy auld sides!

He 's gane, he 's gane! he 's frae us torn,
The ae best fellow e'er was born! — one
Thee, Matthew, Nature's sel shall mourn
By wood and wild,
Where, haply, Pity strays forlorn,
Frae man exil'd.

Ye hills, near neebours o' the starns, — stars
That proudly cock your cresting cairns!
Ye cliffs, the haunts of sailing yearns, — eagles
Where Echo slumbers!
Come join ye, Nature's sturdiest bairns, — children
My wailing numbers!

Mourn, ilka grove the cushat kens! — every—wood-pigeon
Ye hazly shaws and briery dens! — hazel coppices
Ye burnies, wimplin down your glens — brooks—winding
Wi' toddlin din,
Or foaming, strang, wi' hasty stens, — leaps
Frae lin to lin! — cascade

Mourn, little harebells o'er the lea;
Ye stately foxgloves, fair to see;
Ye woodbines, hanging bonilie
In scented bow'rs;

* From a copy of the MS. which is now in the possession of Mr A. C. Lamb, of Dundee.
† *Hamlet*, Act III., scene ii., line 64.

Ye roses on your thorny tree,
The first o' flow'rs!

At dawn, when ev'ry grassy blade
Droops with a diamond at his head;
At ev'n, when beans their fragrance shed
I' th' rustling gale;
Ye maukins, whiddin thro' the glade; hares—skipping
Come join my wail!

Mourn, ye wee songsters o' the wood;
Ye grouse that crap the heather bud;
Ye curlews, calling thro' a clud; cloud
Ye whistling plover;
And mourn, ye whirring paitrick brood: partridge
He 's gane for ever!

Mourn, sooty coots and speckled teals;
Ye fisher herons, watching eels;
Ye duck and drake, wi' airy wheels
Circling the lake;
Ye bitterns, till the quagmire reels
Rair for his sake! Roar

Mourn, clam'ring craiks, at close o' day, corncrakes, landrails
'Mang fields o' flow'ring clover gay!
And when ye wing your annual way
Frae our cauld shore,
Tell thae far warlds wha lies in clay, those
Wham we deplore.

Ye houlets, frae your ivy bow'r owls
In some auld tree or eldritch tow'r, haunted
What time the moon, wi' silent glow'r, stare
Sets up her horn,
Wail thro' the dreary midnight hour
Till waukrife morn! wakeful

O rivers, forests, hills and plains!
Oft have ye heard my canty strains: chee-

But now, what else for me remains
But tales of woe?
And frae my een the drapping rains — eyes
Maun ever flow. — Must

Mourn, Spring, thou darling of the year!
Ilk cowslip cup shall kep a tear; — Each—catch
Thou, Simmer, while each corny spear
Shoots up its head,
Thy gay, green, flow'ry tresses shear
For him that 's dead!

Thou Autumn, wi' thy yellow hair,
In grief thy sallow mantle tear!
Thou, Winter, hurling thro' the air
The roaring blast,
Wide o'er the naked world declare
The worth we 've lost!

Mourn him, thou Sun, great source of light!
Mourn, Empress of the silent night!
And you, ye twinkling starnies bright, — little stars
My Matthew mourn!
For through your orbs he 's taen his flight—
Ne'er to return.

O Henderson! the man! the brother!
And art thou gone, and gone for ever?
And hast thou crost that unknown river,
Life's dreary bound?
Like thee where shall I find another
The world around?

Go to your sculptur'd tombs, ye Great,
In a' the tinsel trash o' state!
But by thy honest turf I 'll wait,
Thou man of worth!
And weep the ae best fellow's fate
E'er lay in earth!

THE EPITAPH.

Stop, passenger! my story's brief,
And truth I shall relate, man:
I tell nae common tale o' grief,
For Matthew was a great man.

If thou uncommon merit hast,
Yet spurn'd at Fortune's door, man;
A look of pity hither cast,
For Matthew was a poor man.

If thou a noble sodger art — soldier
That passest by this grave, man;
There moulders here a gallant heart,
For Matthew was a brave man.

If thou on men, their works and ways,
Canst throw uncommon light, man;
Here lies wha weel had won thy praise,
For Matthew was a bright man.

If thou at Friendship's sacred ca'
Wad life itself resign, man;
Thy sympathetic tear maun fa',
For Matthew was a kind man.

If thou art staunch, without a stain,
Like the unchanging blue, man;
This was a kinsman o' thy ain,
For Matthew was a true man.

If thou hast wit, and fun, and fire,
And ne'er gude wine did fear, man;
This was thy billie, dam and sire, — comrade
For Matthew was a queer man.

If ony whiggish, whingin sot, peevish
To blame poor Matthew dare, man;
May dool and sorrow be his lot, grief
For Matthew was a rare man.

But now his radiant course is run,
For Matthew's was a bright one;
His soul was like the glorious sun,
A matchless, Heav'nly light, man.

Let me know how you like the foregoing. My best compliments to Mrs Cleghorn and family. I am, most truly, my dear Sir, yours,

ROBERT BURNS.

A copy was also forwarded to the chamberlain at Drumlanrig, who had taken an active part in the election contest just concluded.

TO MR JOHN M'MURDO.

ELLISLAND, 2*nd Aug.* 1790.

SIR—Now that you are over with the sirens of Flattery, the harpies of Corruption and the furies of Ambition, those infernal deities that on all sides and in all parties preside over the villainous business of Politics, permit a rustic muse of your acquaintance to do her best to soothe you with a song.

You knew Henderson—I have not flattered his memory. I have the honor to be, Sir, Your obliged humble servant, R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

8th August 1790.

DEAR MADAM—After a long day's toil, plague and care, I sit down to write to you. Ask me not why I have delayed it so long! It was owing to hurry, indolence and fifty other things; in short, to any thing—but forgetfulness of *la plus aimable de son sexe*. By the bye, you are indebted your best curtsey to me for this last compliment, as I pay it from my sincere conviction of its truth—a quality rather rare in compliments of these grinning, bowing, scraping times.

Well, I hope writing to *you* will ease a little my troubled soul. Sorely

has it been bruised to-day! A *ci-devant* friend of mine* and an intimate acquaintance of yours has given my feelings a wound that I perceive will gangrene dangerously ere it cure. He has wounded my pride! . . . R. B.

TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.

ELLISLAND, 8*th August* 1790.

Forgive me, my once dear and ever dear Friend, my seeming negligence. You cannot sit down and fancy the busy life I lead.——

I laid down my Goose-feather to beat my brains for a pat simile, and had some thoughts of a country Grannum [grandmother] at a family christening; a Bride on the market-day before her marriage; an Orthodox Clergyman at a Paisley Sacrament; an Edinburgh Bawd on a Sunday evening; a tavern-keeper at an Election-dinner, &c., &c., &c.—but the resemblance that hits my fancy best is that poor blackguard Miscreant, Satan, who, as Holy Writ tells us, roams about like a roaring lion, seeking, *searching*,† whom he may devour. However, tossed about as I am, if I chuse (and who would not chuse?) to bind down with the crampets of Attention the brazen foundation of Integrity, I may rear up the Superstructure of Independence and from its daring turrets bid defiance to the storms of Fate. And is not this a 'consummation devoutly to be wished?'

Thy spirit, Independence, let me share;
Lord of the lion-heart and eagle-eye!
Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
And brave each blast that sails along the sky!

Are not these glorious verses? They are the introduction of Smollett's 'Ode to Independence:' if you have not seen the Poem, I will send it you. How wretched is the man that hangs on, and by, the favors of the Great! To shrink from every dignity of Man at the approach of a lordly piece of self-consequence, who, amid all his tinsel glitter and stately hauteur, is but a creature formed as thou art and perhaps not so well-formed as thou art—came into the world a puling infant, as thou didst, and must go out of it, as all men must, a stinking corse; and should the important piece of clay-dough deign to cast his supercilious eye over you and make a motion as if to signify his tremendous fiat—then—in all the quaking pangs and staring terrors of self-annihilation, to stutter in crouching syllables—'Speak! Lord!! for thy servant heareth'!!! If such is the damned state of the poor devil, from my inmost soul I pity him.‡ . . . R. B.

* Who is the offending person alluded to in this letter and the next has not transpired.

† *Searching* is apparently used by the poet in a professional sense: Satan searches after the manner of a busy exciseman.

‡ Compared with, and given more completely than hitherto from, a portion of the MS.—now in the National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh. The half-sheet containing the conclusion of the letter and the superscription is (1896) wanting.

TO MISS HELENA CRAIK, ARBIEGLAND.*

[ELLISLAND, *August* 1790.]

MADAM—Some rather unlooked-for accidents have prevented me from doing myself the honor of a second visit to Arbiegland, as I was so hospitably invited, and so positively meant, to have done. However, I still hope to have that pleasure before the busy months of harvest begin.

I inclose you two of my late pieces as some kind of return for the pleasure I have received in perusing a certain MSS. volume of Poems in the possession of Captain Riddel. To repay one with 'an old song' is a proverb whose force you, Madam, I know will not allow. What is said of illustrious descent is, I believe, equally true of a talent for Poesy: none ever despised it who had pretensions to it. It is often a train of thought of mine, when I am disposed to be melancholy, the fates and characters of the rhyming tribe. There is not, among all the martyrologies ever penned, so rueful a narrative as the lives of the Poets. In the comparative view of wretches, the criterion is not what they are doomed to suffer, but how they are formed to bear. Take a being of our kind, give him a stronger imagination and a more delicate sensibility (which, between them, will ever engender a more ungovernable set of passions) than are the usual lot of man; implant in him an irresistible impulse to some idle vagary, such as arranging wild-flowers in fantastical nosegays, tracing the grasshopper to his haunt by his chirping song, watching the frisks of the little minnows in the sunny pool or hunting after the intrigues of wanton butterflies—in short, send him adrift after some pursuit which shall eternally mislead him from the paths of lucre, and yet curse him with a keener relish than any man living for the pleasures that lucre can purchase; lastly, fill up the measures of his woes by bestowing on him a spurning sense of his own dignity, and you have created a wight nearly as miserable as a Poet.

To you, Madam, I need not recount the fairy pleasures the Muse bestows to counterbalance this catalogue of evils. Bewitching Poesy is like bewitching Woman: she has in all ages been accused of misleading mankind from the counsels of Wisdom and the paths of Prudence, involving them in difficulties, baiting them with Poverty, branding them with Infamy, and plunging them in the vortex of Ruin: yet, where is the man but must own that all our happiness on earth is not worthy the name, that even the holy hermit's solitary prospect of paradisiacal bliss is but the glitter of a northern sun rising over a frozen region, compared with the many pleasures, the nameless raptures, that we owe to the lovely queens of the heart of Man!

R. B.

* If the date of this letter be correct—Currie dates it August 1793, but Burns himself in transcribing it into the Glenriddel collection of letters dates it '1789 or 1790'—the poet must, before it was written, have become acquainted with the Craiks, a well-known family in Dumfries, owning the pretty coast estate Arbigland in the parish of Kirkbean, Kirkcudbrightshire. William Craik of Arbigland and Duchra, who died in 1697, and is buried in St Michael's churchyard, Dumfries, was the first provost of Dumfries after the Revolution Settlement. It was in a cottage on Arbigland estate that Paul Jones was born in 1747.

Burns never entertained a higher view of the poetic mission than at this time. Yet he could not be accused of indolence as a man of business. On the contrary, he was manfully attempting to do the work of two or three men. His farm must, of course, have required some attention, even though nearly the whole of the work was done by servants. He had to look after the interests of the revenue in ten parishes. He had to ride on an average two hundred miles a week. The motive of all this activity was the honourable desire to maintain his family by his own exertions and be 'behadden to naebody.'* Allan Cunningham averred that his household was managed laxly; but according to the best evidence, Dr Currie was nearer the truth when he spoke of 'the uniform prudence and good management of Mrs Burns.' The Ayrshire dietary for servants, which Burns naturally imported, was more liberal than that of Dumfriesshire, and hence appeared extravagant to his neighbours. No doubt, also, Burns would now and then spend a few evening-hours with his friends; but these were probably the only periods of relaxation which occurred in his laborious existence.

In 1838, William Clark, who had been ploughman to Burns for six months at Ellisland, bore the following testimony to the worth of his old master:

'Soon after Burns became tenant of Ellisland, William Clark lived with him as servant during the winter half-year, he thinks of 1789–90. . . . Burns kept two men and two women servants; but he invariably, when at home, took his meals with his wife and family in the little parlour. Clark thought he was as good a manager of land as the generality of the farmers in the neighbourhood. The farm of Ellisland was said to be moderately rented, and was susceptible of much improvement, had improvement been in repute. Burns sometimes visited the neighbouring farmers, and they returned the compliment; but that way of

* In Colonel Fullarton's *View of Agriculture in Ayrshire*, 1793, Burns receives a compliment upon a purely technical matter. 'In order,' says the colonel, 'to prevent the danger arising from horned cattle in studs and straw-yards, the best mode is to cut out the budding knob, or root of the horn, while the calf is very young. This was suggested to me by Mr Robert Burns, whose general talents are no less conspicuous than the poetic powers which have done so much honour to the country where he was born.' This Burns doubtless regarded as less cruel than the barbarous method of sawing off the full grown horn, treated as illegal in England, but permitted still in Scotland.

spending time and exchanging civilities was not so common then as now, and, besides, the most of the people thereabouts had no expectation that Burns's conduct and writings would be so much noticed afterwards. Burns kept nine or ten milch-cows, some young cattle, four horses, and several pet sheep: of the latter he was very fond. During the winter and spring time, when he was not engaged with the Excise business, he occasionally held the plough for an hour or so for him (William Clark), and was a fair workman, though the mode of ploughing nowadays is much superior in many respects. During seed-time, Burns might be frequently seen, at an early hour, in the fields with his sowing-sheet; but as business often required his attention from home, he did not sow the whole of the grain. He was a kind and indulgent master, and spoke familiarly to his servants, both in the house and out of it, though, if anything put him out of humour, he was *gey guldersome* [rather passionate] *for a wee while:* the storm was soon over, and there was never a word of *upcast* afterwards. Clark never saw him really angry but once, and it was occasioned by the carelessness of one of the women-servants who had not cut potatoes small enough, which brought one of the cows into danger of being choked. His looks, gestures, and voice on that occasion were terrible: Clark was glad to be out of his sight, and when they met again, Burns was perfectly calm. If any extra work was to be done, the men sometimes got a dram; but Clark had lived with masters who were more *flush* in that way to their servants. Clark, during the six months he spent at Ellisland, never once saw his master intoxicated or incapable of managing his own business. . . . Burns, when at home, usually wore a broad blue bonnet, a blue or drab long-tailed coat, corduroy breeches, dark-blue stockings, and *cootikens* [gaiters], and in cold weather a black-and-white-checked plaid wrapped round his shoulders. Mrs Burns was a good and prudent housewife, kept everything in neat and tidy order, and was well liked by the servants, for whom she provided abundance of wholesome food. At parting, Burns gave Clark a certificate of character, and, besides paying his wages in full, gave him a shilling for a *fairing*.'

Two business documents exhibit Burns's liberality to his dependents. The first is a letter to Mr David Newall, writer in Dumfries, who was factor on the Dalswinton estate: it refers

to the making of a drain, the expense of which, it would appear, Burns and his landlord were to bear in common:

DEAR SIR—Enclosed is a state of the account between you and me and James Halliday respecting the drain. I have stated it at 20d. per rood, as, in fact, even at that, they have not the wages they ought to have had, and I cannot for the soul of me see a poor devil a loser at my hand.

Humanity, I hope, as well as Charity, will cover a multitude of sins, a mantle of which—between you and me—I have some little need. I am, sir, yours, R. B.

Enclosed in this letter is an account in Burns's handwriting between himself and *D.* Halliday, inferring a debit of £10, 17s. 3d. for wages and the building of a yard-dike, and a credit of £11, 1s. 6d., composed of so much in cash, so much in meal and cheese, and certain other sums paid for Halliday. This account does not appear to be that referred to in the letter to Mr. Newall: it seems to be merely a memorandum of the state of D. Halliday's wages at the Martinmas term. It contains, however, equally characteristic matter, for the poet makes an error of summation to the extent of 5s. in Halliday's favour, and overpays him 4s. 3d. besides.

Burns's friend, Ramsay of Ochtertyre, paid him a visit in the course of a tour this summer or autumn, in company with Dr Stewart of Luss. Ramsay subsequently wrote to Dr Currie:

'Seeing him pass quickly, near Closeburn, I said to my companion: "That is Burns." On coming to the inn, the hostler told us he would be back in a few hours to grant permits; that where he met with any thing seizable, he was no better than any other gauger; in every thing else that he was perfectly a gentleman. After leaving a note to be delivered to him on his return, I proceeded to his house, being curious to see his Jean, &c. I was much pleased with his *uxor Sabina qualis* * and the poet's modest mansion, so unlike the habitation of ordinary rustics. In the evening he suddenly bounced in upon us and said, as he entered: "I come, to use the words of Shakespeare, *stewed in haste.*" † In fact, he had ridden incredibly fast after receiving my note. We fell into con-

* 'Quòd si pudica mulier in partem juvet
Domum atque dulces liberos
(*Sabina qualis*, aut perusta solibus
Pernicis *uxor* Appuli),' &c.
HORACE, Book v., *Ode* 2.

† 'A reeking post, stewed in his haste.'—*Lear*, ii. 4.

versation directly, and soon got into the *mare magnum* of poetry. He told me that he had now gotten a story for a drama, which he was to call *Rob Macquechan's Elshon*, from a popular story of Robert Bruce being defeated on the water of Cairn, when the heel of his boot having loosened in his flight, he applied to Robert Macquechan to fit it, who, to make sure, ran his awl nine inches up the king's heel. We were now going on at a great rate, when Mr S[tewart] popped in his head, which put a stop to our discourse, which had become very interesting. Yet in a little while it was resumed, and such was the force and versatility of the bard's genius that he made the tears run down Mr S[tewart]'s cheeks, albeit unused to the poetic strain. . . . From that time we met no more, and I was grieved at the reports of him afterwards. Poor Burns! we shall hardly ever see his like again. He was, in truth, a sort of comet in literature, irregular in its motions, which did not do good proportioned to the blaze of light it displayed.'

If this was a laborious time, it was also a time of hope for Burns. He had been only a year in the service of the revenue, and already, by the kind interest of Mr Graham, his promotion to a supervisorship, with an income of £200 a year, was talked of. So bright, indeed, were the prospects of the poet that Nicol affected to dread that he would forget his old friends, as appears from a letter to Mr Robert Ainslie, dated August 13, 1790: 'As to Burns, poor folks like you and I must resign all thoughts of future correspondence with him. To the pride of applauded genius is now superadded the pride of office. He was lately raised to the dignity of an Examiner of Excise, which is a step preparative to attaining that of a *supervisor*.* Therefore we can expect no less than that his language will become perfectly *Horatian*—"odi profanum vulgus et arceo." However, I will see him in a fortnight hence; and if I find that Beelzebub has inflated his heart like a bladder with pride, and given it the fullest distension that vanity can effect, you and I will burn him in effigy, and write a satire, as bitter as gall and wormwood, against government for employing its *enemies*, like Lord North, to effect its purposes. This will be taking all the revenge in our power.'

* On this point Nicol was misinformed; probably Burns's friends were too confident of his early promotion. According to the official excise record he was placed on the 'Register of Persons put on the list for examiners and supervisors' on 27th January 1791.

In ranking Burns among the enemies of the government, Nicol was doubtless hitting at his predilection for the cause of the Stuarts. The poet had not as yet come under suspicion of hostility to the administration of the day.

In the autumn of 1790,* Dr James Anderson, a popular writer on agriculture, political economy, and other subjects, planned a small periodical, combining instruction with entertainment, to be entitled *The Bee*. It commenced in December of this year, and was continued till January 1794, when eighteen duodecimo volumes were completed. Dr Anderson appears to have secured the good-natured interest of Dr Blacklock in behalf of his undertaking, and the blind poet in September addressed a playful poetical letter to Burns, entreating him to become a contributor:

TO MR ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 1*st September* [1790]

How does my dear friend (much I languish to hear),
His fortune, relations, and all that are dear?
With love of the Muses so strongly still smitten,
I meant this epistle in verse to have written:
But from age and infirmity indolence flows,
And this, much I fear, will restore me to prose.
Anon to my business I wish to proceed—
Dr Anderson guides and provokes me to speed—
A man of integrity, genius, and worth,
Who soon a performance intends to set forth;
A work miscellaneous, extensive and free,
Which will weekly appear, by the name of *The Bee*.
Of this from himself I enclose you a plan,
And hope you will give what assistance you can.
Entangled with business and haunted with care,
In which more or less human nature must share,
Some moments of leisure the Muses will claim,
A sacrifice due to amusement and fame.
The Bee, which sucks honey from every gay bloom,
With some rays of your genius her work may illume;
Whilst the flower whence her honey spontaneously flows,
As fragrantly smells and as vig'rously grows.

* James Anderson (1739–1808) was born at Hermiston, near Edinburgh; invented the two-horse plough without wheels, known as the Scotch plough; rented a large farm in Aberdeenshire; at the age of twenty-four wrote *Recreations of Agriculture* and other essays; three years after the demise of *The Bee* migrated to London, where he died.

Now with kind gratulations 'tis time to conclude,
And add, your promotion is here understood;
Thus free from the servile employ of Excise, sir,
We hope soon to hear you commence supervisor;
You then more at leisure, and free from control,
May indulge the strong passion that reigns in your soul.
But I, feeble I, must to Nature give way;
Devoted cold death's and longevity's prey;
From verses, though languid, my thoughts must unbend,
Though still I remain your affectionate friend—

THOMAS BLACKLOCK.

A fragment of a letter of Burns to Dr Anderson, which Cromek recovered, evidently refers to this application: *

TO DR JAMES ANDERSON, EDINBURGH.

SIR—I am much indebted to my worthy friend Dr Blacklock, for introducing me to a Gentleman of Mr Anderson's celebrity; but when you do me the honor to ask my assistance in your purposed Publication, Alas, Sir! you might as well think to cheapen a little honesty at the sign of an Advocate's wig or Humility under the Geneva Band. I am a miserable hurried devil, worn to the marrow in the friction of holding the noses of the Poor Publicans to the grindstone of the Excise! and like Milton's *Satan*, for private reasons, am forced

To do what yet though damn'd I would abhor;

—and, except a couplet or two of honest execration * * *. R. B.

Burns's brother William had gone from Newcastle to London, and had obtained employment from a saddler in the Strand. He had been there scarcely five months, when he was seized with fever and died (July 24). The expense of his last illness and funeral appears to have been promptly discharged by the poet, as the receipt for it is dated 8th October. Murdoch delayed transmitting notice of the death for nearly two months, an extraordinary length of time.

* The draft of this reply is on the reverse of the MS. of 'The Collier Laddie'—in the Public Library at Liverpool.

MR JOHN MURDOCH TO ROBERT BURNS.

HART STREET, BLOOMSBURY SQUARE,
LONDON, *September 14th*, 1790.

MY DEAR FRIEND—Yours of the 16th of July I received on the 26th, in the afternoon, per favor of my friend Mr Kennedy, and at the same time was informed that your brother was ill. Being engaged in business till late that evening, I set out next morning to see him, and had thought of three or four medical gentlemen of my acquaintance, to one or other of whom I might apply for advice, provided it should be necessary. But when I went to Mr Barber's, to my great astonishment and heart-felt grief, I found that my young friend had, on Saturday, bid an everlasting farewell to all sublunary things. It was about a fortnight before that he had found me out, by Mr Stevenson's accidentally calling at my shop to buy something. We had only one interview, and that was highly entertaining to me in several respects. He mentioned some instruction I had given him when very young, to which he said he owed, in a great measure, the philanthropy he possessed. He also took notice of my exhorting you all, when I wrote, about eight years ago, to the man who, of all mankind that I ever knew, stood highest in my esteem, 'not to let go your integrity.' You may easily conceive that such conversation was both pleasing and encouraging to me: I anticipated a deal of rational happiness from future conversations. Vain are our expectations and hopes. They are so almost always. Perhaps (nay, certainly) for our good. Were it not for disappointed hopes we could hardly spend a thought on another state of existence or be in any degree reconciled to the quitting of this.

I know of no one source of consolation to those who have lost young relatives equal to that of their being of a good disposition and of a promising character. . . .

* * * * *

Be assured, my dear friend, that I cordially sympathize with you all and particularly with Mrs W. Burns, who is undoubtedly one of the most tender and affectionate mothers that ever lived. Remember me to her in the most friendly manner, when you see her or write. Please present my best compliments to Mrs R. Burns and to your brother and sisters. There is no occasion for me to exhort you to filial duty and to use your united endeavors in rendering the evening of life as comfortable as possible to a mother who has dedicated so great a part of it in promoting your temporal and spiritual welfare.

Your letter to Dr Moore I delivered at his house, and shall most likely know your opinion of *Zeluco* the first time I meet with him. I wish and hope for a long letter. Be particular about your mother's health. I hope she is too much a Christian to be afflicted above measure or to sorrow as those who have no hope.

One of the most pleasing hopes I have is to visit you all; but I am commonly disappointed in what I most ardently wish for. I am, Dear Sir, Yours sincerely, JOHN MURDOCH.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

DUMFRIES, GLOBE INN, *4th Sept.* 1790.

SIR—The very kind letter you did me the honour to write me reached me just as I was setting in to the whirlpool of an Excise-fraud court, from the vortex of which I am just emerged—Heaven knows, in a very unfit situation to do justice to the workings of my bosom when I sit down to write to the

'Friend of my life—true patron of my rhymes!'

As my division consists of ten large parishes, and, I am sorry to say, hitherto very carelessly surveyed, I had a good deal of business for the justices; and I believe my decreet* will amount to between fifty and sixty pounds. I took, I fancy, rather a new way with my frauds. I recorded every defaulter; but at the court I myself begged off every poor body that was unable to pay, which seeming candour gave me so much implicit credit with the honourable bench, that, with high compliments, they gave me such ample vengeance on the rest, that my *decreet* is double the amount of any division in the district.

I am going either to give up or subset my farm directly. I have not liberty to subset; but if my master will grant it me, I propose giving it, just as I have it myself, to an industrious fellow of a near relation of mine. Farming this place in which I live would just be a livelihood to a man who would be the greatest drudge in his own family; so is no object; and living here hinders me from that knowledge in the business of Excise which it is so absolutely necessary for me to attain.

I did not like to be an incessant beggar from you. A port-division I wish, if possible, to get; my kind, funny friend, Captain Grose, offered to interest Mr Brown and perhaps Mr Wharton, for me: a very handsome opportunity offered of getting Mr Corbet, supervisor-general, to pledge every service in his power; and then I was just going to acquaint you with what I had done, or rather what was done for me, that as everybody have their particular friends to serve, you might find the less obstacle in what, I assure you, sir, I constantly count on—your wishes and endeavours to be of service to me. As I had an eye to getting on the examiner's list, if attainable by me, I was going to ask you if it would be of any service to try the interest of some great, and some *very* great, folks, to whom I have the honour to be known—I mean in the way

* 'Decreet' (*decretum*, the final sentence of a judge, or in Scots law a warrant to recover duty or penalty) means in this case the amount awarded by the Justices of the Peace to an Excise officer during a particular period for assisting to convict Revenue defaulters.

of a Treasury warrant. But much as early impressions have given me of the horrors of spectres, &c., still I would face the arch-fiend, in Miltonic pomp, at the head of all his legions, and hear that infernal shout which blind John says 'tore hell's concave,' rather than crawl in, a dust-licking petitioner, before the lofty presence of a mighty man, and bear amid all the mortifying pangs of self-annihilation, the swelling consequence of his d—— state and the cold monosyllables of his hollow heart!

It was in the view of trying for a port that I asked Collector Mitchell to get me appointed, which he has done, to a vacant foot-walk in Dumfries. If ever I am so fortunate as to be called out to do business as a supervisor, I would then choose the north of Scotland; but until that Utopian period, I own I have some wayward feelings of appearing as a simple gauger in a country where I am only known by fame. Port-Glasgow, Greenock or Dumfries ports would, in the meantime, be my ultimatum.

I enclose you a tribute I have just been paying to the memory of my friend, Matthew Henderson, whom I daresay you must have known. I had acknowledged your goodness sooner but for want of time to transcribe the poem. Poor Matthew! I can forgive poverty for hiding virtue and piety. They are not only plants that flourish best in the shade, but they also produce their sacred fruits, more especially for another world; but when the haggard beldame throws her invidious veil over wit, spirit, &c.,—but I trust another world will cast light on the subject.

I have the honour to be, sir, your deeply obliged and very humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

The 'Excise-fraud' mentioned in this letter is explained by some documents bearing testimony to Burns's diligence and exactness in the exercise of his office, which have been preserved. The first is a petition of Thomas Johnston, farmer at Mirecleugh, addressed to the justices of peace for Dumfriesshire, reclaiming against a fine of £5 which Collector Mitchell had imposed on him for 'making fifty-four bushels of malt, without entry, notice, or licence.' 'J.,' we are told, stated that he had been in the habit of making malt for forty years without making entry of his kiln or pond, which he deemed unnecessary, because the malting was always effected at one operation, and not till notice had been given to the proper officer. With respect to 'notice' on this occasion—having inquired of Mr Burns which was the best way of sending it to him, he had been informed that a letter might be sent to 'John Kelloch's,' in Thornhill, whence it might be forwarded by post. He had brought Mrs Kelloch to swear that such a letter had been sent to her

by J.'s son for Mr Burns, but had been mislaid. He offered to swear that he had sent the notice to Thornhill in good time, and had no intention to defraud the revenue. With respect to 'licence,' J. averred that he had only been prevented from renewing it as usual this year because Mr Mitchell, on his applying for it had put him off to another time, on the score of being too busy at the time to grant it to him.

In respect of Johnston's petition, the justices, Mr Fergusson of Craigdarroch and Captain Riddel, ordered the collector to stop proceedings until they should have had an opportunity of inquiring into the truth of what it set forth. Then came Burns's

ANSWER TO THE PETITION OF THOMAS JOHNSTON.

[*September* 1790.]

'1. Whether the petitioner has been in use formerly to malt all his grain at one operation, is foreign to the purpose: this last season he certainly malted his crop at four or five operations; but be that as it may, Mr J. ought to have known that by express act of parliament no malt, however small the quantity, can be legally manufactured until previous entry be made in writing of all the ponds, barns, floors, &c., so as to be used before the grain can be put to steep. In the Excise entry-books for the division, there is not a syllable of T. J.'s name for a number of years bygone.

'2. True it is that Mr Burns, on his first ride, in answer to Mr J.'s question anent the conveying of the notices, among other ways pointed out the sending it by post as the most eligible method, but at the same time added this express clause, and to which Mr Burns is willing to make faith: "At the same time, remember, Mr J., that the notice is at your risk until it reach me!" Further, when Mr Burns came to the petitioner's kiln, there was a servant belonging to Mr J. ploughing at a very considerable distance from the kiln, who left his plough and three horses without a driver, and came into the kiln, which Mr B. thought was rather a suspicious circumstance, as there was nothing so extraordinary in an Excise-officer going into a legal malt-floor so as to [induce a man to] leave three horses yoked to a plough in the distant middle of a moor. This servant, on being repeatedly questioned by Mr Burns, could not tell when the malt was put

to steep, when it was taken out, &c.—in short, was determined to be entirely ignorant of the affair. By and by, Mr J.'s son came in; and on being questioned as to the steeping, taking out of the grain, &c., Mr J., junior, referred me to this said servant, this ploughman, who, he said, must remember it best, as having been the principal actor in the business. The lad *then*, having gotten his cue, circumstantially recollected all about it.

'All this time, though I was telling the son and servant the nature of the premunire* they had incurred, though they pleaded for mercy keenly, the affair of the notice having been sent never once occurred to them, not even the son, who is said to have been the bearer. This was a stroke reserved for, and worthy of, the gentleman himself. As to Mrs Kelloch's oath, it proves nothing. She did, indeed, depone to a line being left for me at her house, which said line miscarried. It was a sealed letter: she could not tell whether it was a malt-notice or not; she could not even condescend on the month, nor so much as the season of the year. The truth is T. J. and his family being Seceders [Dissenters], and consequently coming every Sunday to Thornhill Meeting-house, they were a good conveyance for the several maltsters and traders in their neighbourhood to transmit to post their notices, permits, &c.

'But why all this tergiversation? It was put to the petitioner in open court, after a full investigation of the cause: "Was he willing to swear that he meant no fraud in the matter?" And the justices told him, that if he swore, he would be assoilzied, otherwise he should be fined; still the petitioner, after ten minutes' consideration, found his conscience unequal to the task, and declined the oath.

'Now, indeed, he says he is willing to swear: he has been exercising his conscience in private, and will perhaps stretch a point. But the fact to which he is to swear was equally and in all parts known to him on that day when he refused to swear as to-day: nothing can give him further light as to the intention of his mind, respecting his meaning or not meaning a fraud in the affair. *No time can cast further light on the present resolves of the mind; but time will reconcile, and has reconciled, many a man to that iniquity which he at first abhorred.*'

* Burns here, as before, uses 'premunire' in the sense of penalty.

This is followed by a note of Collector Mitchell, calling for confirmation of judgment against Johnston.* A brief undated letter of Burns to the Collector evidently refers to the affair, and shows that the poet was far from being assured that the justices would decide in favour of the revenue.

TO JOHN MITCHELL, ESQ., COLLECTOR OF EXCISE, DUMFRIES.

ELLISLAND, [*October* 13, 1790].

SIR—I shall not fail to wait on Captain Riddel to-night—I wish and pray that the goddess of justice herself would appear to-morrow among our hon. gentlemen, merely to give them a word in their ear that mercy to the thief is injustice to the honest man. For my part, I have galloped over my ten parishes these four days, until this moment that I am just alighted, or rather, that my poor jackass-skeleton of a horse has let me down, for the miserable devil has been on his knees half a score of times within the last twenty miles, telling me in his own way, 'Behold, am not I thy faithful jade of a horse, on which thou hast ridden these many years!'†

In short, Sir, I have broke my horse's wind, and almost broke my own neck, besides some injuries in a part that shall be nameless, owing to a hard-hearted stone for a saddle. I find that every offender has so many great men to espouse his cause that I shall not be surprised if I am committed to the strong hold of the law to-morrow for insolence to the dear friends of the gentlemen of the county. I have the honour to be, Sir, your obliged and obedient humble R. B.

How the matter ended does not appear.

TO CRAUFURD TAIT, ESQ., W.S., EDINBURGH.‡

ELLISLAND, *Oct.* 15, 1790.

DEAR SIR—Allow me to introduce to your acquaintance the bearer, Mr William Duncan, a friend of mine, whom I have long known and long loved. His father, whose only son he is, has a decent little property in Ayrshire, and has bred the young man to the law, in which department he comes up an adventurer to your good town. I shall give you my

* The documents respecting the Mirecleugh prosecution, exclusive of the letter which follows, were found among the official papers of Mr Kerr, who was clerk of the peace at the time. The answers by Burns are in his well-known hand, without signature.

† Paraphrased from Balaam's ass.—*Numbers* xxii. 30.

‡ Son of John Tait of Harvieston, where Burns had been entertained in 1787. He succeeded to the estate of Harvieston on the death of his father in 1800; married a daughter of Lord President Sir Islay Campbell; died 1832, aged sixty-seven. His fifth son was Archibald Campbell Tait, late Archbishop of Canterbury. Mr James Orr is the present (1896) proprietor of Harvieston.

friend's character in two words: as to his head, he has talents enough, and more than enough, for common life; as to his heart, when nature had kneaded the kindly clay that composes it, she said 'I can no more.'

You, my good sir, were born under kinder stars; but your fraternal sympathy, I well know, can enter into the feelings of the young man who goes into life with the laudable ambition to *do* something, and to *be* something among his fellow-creatures; but whom the consciousness of friendless obscurity presses to the earth and wounds to the soul!

Even the fairest of his virtues are against him. That independent spirit and that ingenuous modesty, qualities inseparable from a noble mind, are, with the million, circumstances not a little disqualifying. What pleasure is in the power of the fortunate and the happy, by their notice and patronage, to brighten the countenance and glad the heart of such depressed youth! I am not so angry with mankind for their deaf economy of the purse: The goods of this world cannot be divided without being lessened—but why be a niggard of that which bestows bliss on a fellow-creature yet takes nothing from our own means of enjoyment? We wrap ourselves up in the cloak of our own better-fortune, and turn away our eyes lest the wants and woes of our brother-mortals should disturb the selfish apathy of our souls!

I am the worst hand in the world at asking a favor. That indirect address, that insinuating implication; which, without any positive request, plainly expresses your wish, is a talent not to be acquired at a plough-tail. Tell me, then, for you can, in what periphrasis of language, in what circumvolution of phrase, I shall envelope, yet not conceal, this plain story—'My dear Mr Tait, my friend Mr Duncan, whom I have the pleasure of introducing to you, is a young lad of your own profession, and a gentleman of much modesty and great worth. Perhaps it may be in your power to assist him in the, to him, important consideration of getting a place; but at all events, your notice and acquaintance will be a very great acquisition to him; and I dare pledge myself that he will never disgrace your favor.'

You may possibly be surprised, Sir, at such a letter from me; 'tis, I own, in the usual way of calculating these matters, more than our acquaintance entitles me to; but my answer is short; Of all the men at your time of life whom I knew in Edinburgh, you are the most accessible on the side on which I have assailed you. You are very much altered indeed from what you were when I knew you, if generosity point the path you will not tread, or humanity call to you in vain.

As to myself, a being to whose interest I believe you are still a well-wisher; I am here, breathing at all times, thinking sometimes, and rhyming now and then. Every situation has its share of the cares and pains of life, and my situation, I am persuaded, has a full ordinary allowance of its pleasures and enjoyments.

My best compliments to your father and Miss Tait. If you have an opportunity, please remember me in the solemn league and covenant of friendship to Mrs Lewis Hay. I am a wretch for not writing to her;

but I am so hackneyed with self-accusation in that way, that my conscience lies in my bosom with scarce the sensibility of an oyster in its shell. Where is Lady Mackenzie? wherever she is, God bless her! I likewise beg leave to trouble you with compliments to Mr Wm. Hamilton, Mrs Hamilton and family, and Mrs Chalmers, when you are in that country. Should you meet with Miss Nimmo, please remember me kindly to her. R. B.

On the day when Burns wrote this letter, he received a visit from his young friend Robert Ainslie. It was the *kirn*-night—when the harvest-home was celebrated, and Ainslie found at Ellisland, besides a sister of Burns and a sister of Mrs Burns, who were ordinary inmates of the house, three male and female cousins who had been assisting in the harvest-work, and a few homely neighbours. 'We spent the evening,' says Ainslie in a letter to Mrs M'Lehose, 'in the way common on such occasions—of dancing, and kissing the lasses at the end of every dance.' The guest speaks of Burns's hearty welcome to himself, and of his kind attentions to Mrs Burns, but does not seem to have thought the *ménage* and company worthy of the poet. 'Our friend,' he says, 'is as ingenious as ever, and seems happy with the situation I have described. His mind, however, seems to me to be a great mixture of the poet and exciseman. One day he sits down and writes a beautiful poem—and the next seizes a cargo of tobacco from some unfortunate smuggler, or roups out some poor wretch for selling liquors without a licence. From his conversation, he seems to be pretty frequently among the great. . . . Having found that his farm does not answer, he is about to give it up, and depend wholly on the Excise.'

As if to make up by one great effort for the scant attention he had this year given to the Muse, Burns composed in the autumn * the poem of 'Tam o' Shanter.' According to Gilbert Burns, it originated thus: 'When my father feued his little property near Alloway Kirk, the wall of the churchyard had gone to ruin, and cattle had free liberty of pasture in it. My father and two or three neighbours joined in an application to the town-council of Ayr, who were superiors of the adjoining land, for

* It has been contended, more particularly by M. Porteous, Maybole, in *The Real 'Souter Johnny,'* that the first draft of this poem was written by Burns when a lad at Kirkoswald, and that he only 'brushed up' the poem at Ellisland.

liberty to rebuild it, and raised by subscription a sum for enclosing this ancient cemetery with a wall: hence he came to consider it as his burial-place, and we learned that reverence for it people generally have for the burial-place of their ancestors. My brother was living in Ellisland, when Captain Grose, on his peregrinations through Scotland, stayed some time at Carse House in the neighbourhood, with Captain Robert Riddel of Glenriddel, a particular friend of my brother's. The antiquary and the poet were "unco pack and thick thegither." Robert requested of Captain Grose, when he should come to Ayrshire, that he would make a drawing of Alloway Kirk, as it was the burial-place of his father, where he himself had a sort of claim to lay down his bones when they should be no longer serviceable to him; and added, by way of encouragement, that it was the scene of many a good story of witches and apparitions, of which he knew the captain was very fond. The captain agreed to the request, provided the poet would furnish a witch-story, to be printed along with it. "Tam o' Shanter" was produced on this occasion, and was first published in Grose's *Antiquities of Scotland.*'*

'The poem,' says Mr Lockhart, 'was the work of one day; and Mrs Burns well remembers the circumstances. He spent most of the day on his favourite walk by the river, where, in the afternoon, she joined him with some of her children—[there were then only two]. He was busily *crooning to himsel*, and Mrs Burns, perceiving that her presence was an interruption, loitered behind with her little ones among the broom. Her attention was presently attracted by the strange and wild gesticulations of the bard, who, now at some distance, was *agonised* with an ungovernable access of joy. He was reciting very loud, and with the tears rolling down his cheeks, those animated verses beginning:

> "Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,
> A' plump and strapping in their teens!
> Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
> Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen!—

* Grose's *Antiquities* was published in April 1791 with this acknowledgment, 'To my *ingenious* friend, Mr Robert Burns, I have been variously obligated; he was not only at the pains of marking out what was worthy of notice in Ayrshire, the county honoured by his birth, but he also wrote expressly for the work, the *pretty tale* annexed to Alloway Church.'

Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies
For ae blink o' the bonie burdies!"'*

TAM O' SHANTER:

A TALE.

'Of Brownyis and of Bogillis full is this Buke.'
GAWIN DOUGLAS.

When chapman billies leave the street, — packman fellows
And drouthy neebors neebors meet; — thirsty
As market days are wearing late,
An' folk begin to tak the gate; — road
While we sit bousing at the nappy, — ale
An' gettin fou and unco happy, — full, mellow—very
We think na on the lang Scots miles,†
The mosses, waters, slaps, and stiles, — bogs
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest Tam o' Shanter, — found
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter:
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses
For honest men and bonny lasses).

O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise
As taen thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum, — rogue
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum;‡
That frae November till October
Ae market-day thou was na sober;

* 'The above,' says Mr Lockhart, 'is quoted from a manuscript journal of Cromek. Mr M'Diarmid confirms the statement, and adds that the poet, having committed the verses to writing to the top of his sod-dyke over the water, came into the house, and read them immediately in high triumph at the fireside.'

† A mile Scots was longer than an English or imperial mile.

‡ An idle-talking fellow.

That ilka melder* wi' the miller — every
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller; — money
That every naig was ca'd a shoe on — shod
The smith † and thee gat roaring fou on;
That at the L—d's house, ev'n on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.‡
She prophesy'd that, late or soon,
Thou wad be found deep drown'd in Doon;
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk — wizards —darkness
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet — makes—weep
To think how mony counsels sweet,
How mony lengthen'd, sage advices
The husband from the wife despises!

But to our tale:—Ae market night,
Tam had got planted unco right;
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely, — fire
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely; — foaming—new ale
And at his elbow, Souter Johnny, — Cobbler
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony; — thirsty
Tam lo'ed him like a very brither;
They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter;

* 'The quantity of meal ground at the mill at one time.'—JAMIESON.

† 'Oct. 22, 1823 [died] at Doonfoot Mill, Mr David Watt, miller, in the sixty-eighth year of his age. He was school-fellow with the celebrated Robert Burns, and the last person baptised in Alloway Kirk.'—*Magazine obituary.* According to local tradition, the name of the miller celebrated in the poem was Hugh Broun, a relative of the poet on the mother's side, and he lived in what is now the farmhouse of Ardlochan, then known as Damhouse. There also, according to the same authority, lived John Niven 'the smith,' who was the first person that manufactured wheel-carts in that part of the district of Carrick—cars or sledges having been previously used, which were dragged over the ground, without the intervention of wheel and axletree.

‡ In Scotland, the village where a parish-church is situated is usually called the Kirkton. A certain Jean Kennedy, who, with her sister Ann, kept a reputable public-house in the village of Kirkoswald, is here alluded to. The author of *The Real 'Souter Johnny'* says, 'Although, from the way in which she is introduced in the Tale, Jean's character may appear in a doubtful colour, she was notwithstanding, as well as her younger sister, a woman of staid and peaceable habits, and of genteel and respectable exterior. Jean, being the elder sister, had the charge of the "public" department of household duties, so that those "drouthy neebors" who frequented the house regarded it in that light, as hers.' This house was known as 'The Leddies' House,' and is believed to be indicated in the previous line by 'L—d's House,' which met the exigencies of rhythm better than the village nickname. See Vol. I., p. 49.

And ay the ale was growing better:
The Landlady and Tam grew gracious
Wi' favours secret, sweet and precious:
The Souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:*
The storm without might rair and rustle, roar
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drown'd himself amang the nappy,
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure, loads
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure:
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever;†
Or like the borealis race
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form
Evanishing amid the storm.
Nae man can tether time or tide;
The hour approaches Tam maun ride; must
That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;
And sic a night he taks the road in
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last; would have
The rattling show'rs rose on the blast;
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
Loud, deep, and lang, the thunder bellow'd:

* Robert Ainslie stated that when Burns recited the poem to him at Ellisland he added here the lines:

'The crickets joined the chirping cry,
The kittlin chased her tail for joy.'

† Candidior nivibus, tunc cum cecidere recentes,
In liquidas nondum quas mora vertit aquas.
Ovid, *Amor.* iii. 5.

That night a child might understand
The Deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his gray mare, Meg,
A better never lifted leg,
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire, rattled—puddle
Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
Whiles holding fast his gude blue bonnet;
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet; humming
Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares gazing
Lest bogles catch him unawares: hobgoblins
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,*
Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry. owls

* 'Alloway Kirk, with its little enclosed burial-ground, stands beside the road from Ayr to Maybole, about two miles from the former town. The church has long been roofless, but the walls are pretty well preserved, and it still retains its bell at the east end. Upon the whole, the spectator is struck with the idea that the witches must have had a rather narrow stage for the performance of their revels, as described in the poem. The inner area is now divided by a partition-wall, and one part forms the family burial-place of Mr Cathcart of Blairston. The "winnock-bunker in the east," where sat the awful musician of the party, is a conspicuous feature, being a small window divided by a thick mullion. Around the building are the vestiges of other openings, at any of which the hero of the tale may be supposed to have looked in upon the hellish scene. Within the last few years, the old oaken-rafters of the kirk were mostly entire, but they have now been entirely taken away, to form, in various shapes, memorials of a place so remarkably signalised by genius. It is necessary for those who survey the ground in reference to the poem, to be informed that the old road from Ayr to this spot, by which Burns supposed his hero to have approached Alloway Kirk, was considerably to the west of the present one, which, nevertheless, has existed since before the time of Burns. Upon a field about a quarter of a mile to the north-west of the kirk, is a single tree enclosed with a paling, the last remnant of a group which covered

——————"the cairn
Whare hunters fand the murdered bairn;"

and immediately beyond is

——————"the ford,
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoored"

(namely, a ford over a small burn which soon after joins the Doon)—being two places which Tam o' Shanter is described as having passed on his solitary way. The road then made a sweep towards the river, and, passing a well which trickles down into the Doon, where formerly stood a thorn on which an individual, called in the poem "Mungo's mither," committed suicide, approached Alloway Kirk upon the west. These circumstances may here appear trivial, but it is surprising with what interest any visitor to the real scene will inquire into, and behold every part of it which can be associated, however remotely, with the poem of "Tam o' Shanter." The church-yard contains several old monuments, of a very humble description, marking the resting-places of undistinguished persons, who formerly lived in the neighbourhood, and probably had the usual hereditary title to little spaces of ground in this ancient cemetery. Among those persons rests William Burness, father of the poet, over whose grave the son had piously raised a small stone, recording his name and the date of his death, together with the short poetical tribute to his memory which is copied in the works of the bard. But for this monument, long ago destroyed and carried

By this time he was 'cross the ford,
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd; smothered
And past the birks and meikle stane birches—big
Whare drunken Charlie brak 's neck-bane;
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn gorse—pile of stones
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn; child
And near the thorn, aboon the well, above
Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.
Before him Doon pours all his floods,
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;
The lightnings flash frae pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll:
When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing; every cranny
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' tippenny,* we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquabae we 'll face the devil! whisky
The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
Fair play, he car'd na deils a boddle.†
But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,
Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,
She ventur'd forward on the light;
And, vow! Tam saw an unco sight! in sooth!—marvellous

Warlocks and witches in a dance;
Nae cotillion brent new frae France, brand-new

away piecemeal, there is now substituted one of somewhat finer proportions. But the church-yard of Alloway has now become fashionable with the dead as well as the living. Its little area is absolutely crowded with modern monuments, referring to persons many of whom have been brought from considerable distances to take their rest in this doubly consecrated ground. Among these is one to the memory of a person named Tyrie, who, visiting the spot some years ago, happened to express a wish that he might be laid in Alloway Church-yard, and, as fate would have it, was interred in the spot he had pointed out within a fortnight. Nor is this all; for even the neighbouring gentry are now contending for departments in this fold of the departed, and it is probable that the elegant mausolea of rank and wealth will soon be jostling with the stunted obelisks of humble worth and noteless poverty.'—*Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 1833.

* A weak kind of beer, which was sold at 2d. the Scots pint, equal to two quarts.

† With fair play, he thought, he didn't care a halfpenny.

But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels.
A winnock-bunker in the east,* window-recess
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast;
A towzie tyke, black, grim and large, shaggy dog
To gie them music was his charge:
He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl squeezed the bag-pipes—scream
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl. ring
Coffins stood round, like open presses, cupboards
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
And, by some devilish cantraip sleight, weird trick
Each in its cauld hand held a light—
By which heroic Tam was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's banes, in gibbet-airns; irons
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
A thief new-cutted frae a rape, from a rope
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape; mouth
Five tomahawks wi' blude red-rusted;
Five scymitars wi' murder crusted;
A garter which a babe had strangled;
A knife a father's throat had mangled—
Whom his ain son o' life bereft—
The grey hairs yet stack to the heft; stuck to the handle

* 'The origin of this grotesque poetic conceit,' writes Mr James Tennant, Hillend Gardens, Glasgow, great-grandson of 'Auld Glenconner,' 'is as follows: When our great-grandfather was at Corton, Bridge of Doon, a Highland bullock went amissing from one or other of the neighbouring pastures, strayed into the Kirk Yard, passed into the Kirk, could nowhere be found, and went half mad with hunger. A day or so after, some woman body passing the Kirk looked in and was saluted with a fearful roar, and seeing a pair of huge horns projecting above the seats in which the animal had become entangled, she fled in terror and raised the alarm that the Deil was in the Kirk. My grandfather, who was a youngster of perhaps thirteen or fourteen, was curious to see his "Majesty," and recognising in him the missing bullock, gave the necessary information, and was present when the beast was extricated. Robert Burns was a boy of perhaps eight or ten, and hearing the terrible story of the Kirk being invaded by "Clootie," had it fixed in his mind, and afterwards wove it into the world-known story of "Tam o' Shanter." In taking "Nick" out of the Kirk one of his horns was knocked off and was taken to Corton. When the family removed to Glenconner, the horn was brought with them, and was long used as a bolting tube for giving medicine to cattle. Many years after, the sexton and town-crier in Ochiltree (Peter Kennet) being in want of a horn for making the village proclamations, and for blowing through the village in the early morning to waken the villagers—clocks then being few—the old Alloway "Clootie" horn was then given to him, fitted with a silver mouthpiece, and used for years to call up the villagers to their daily work.' The horn passed through various hands, and is now (1896) the property of Sir Charles Tennant.

Wi' mair of horrible and awefu',
Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowr'd, amaz'd and curious, stared
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious:
The piper loud and louder blew,
The dancers quick and quicker flew:
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit, took hands
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit, witch—steamed
And coost her duddies to the wark, threw off—clothes
And linket at it in her sark! set to it—shift

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans, these—young women
A' plump and strapping in their teens!
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen, greasy flannel
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linnen!—*
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair, These
That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies buttocks
For ae blink o' the bonie burdies! birds

But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie † hags wad spean ‡ a foal,
Lowping and flinging on a crummock, Leaping—stick with a crooked head
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

But Tam kend what was what fu' brawlie: quite well
There was ae winsome wench and wawlie, comely
That night enlisted in the core corps
(Lang after kend on Carrick shore:
For mony a beast to dead she shot, death
And perish'd mony a bonny boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear, much—barley
And held the country-side in fear).
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn, short shift—coarse linen
That while a lassie she had worn,

* 'The manufacturer's term for a fine linen, woven in a reed of 1700 divisions.'—CROMEK.

† Usually interpreted as worthy of the gallows; but this is very doubtful. *Rigwoodie* is the chain or rope which crosses the saddle of a horse's harness to support the shafts of a cart; hence it also means *durable, tough, stubborn*, and so may here mean simply *withered, wizened*.

‡ Would wean a foal through sheer fright.

In longitude tho' sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie.— proud of it
Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie,
That sark she coft for her wee Nannie, bought
Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches), 3s. 6d. English
Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches! *

But here my Muse her wing maun cour, fold
Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r;
To sing how Nannie lap and flang leaped—kicked
(A souple jade she was and strang),
And how Tam stood like ane bewitch'd
And thought his very een enrich'd;
Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain, gazed and hitched his shoulders in glee
And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main, squirmed
Till first ae caper, syne anither, then
Tam tint his reason a' thegither lost—altogether
And roars out 'Weel done, Cutty-sark!'
And in an instant all was dark;
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke, fret
When plundering herds assail their byke; herd-boys—nest
As open pussie's mortal foes, the hare's
When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager runs the market-crowd,
When 'Catch the thief!' resounds aloud;
So Maggie runs—the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldritch skreech and hollow. frightful

Ah, Tam! Ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin! reward, treat
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!
In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin!
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!

* A woman, named Katie Steven or Stein, who lived a solitary life at Laighpark, in the parish of Kirkoswald, and died there in 1816, is thought to have been the personage represented under the character of Cutty-sark. She enjoyed the reputation of being a good fortune-teller, and was rather a favourite guest among her neighbours; yet with others, who knew her less, she was reputed a witch, addicted to the practices described in the poem. She is also said to have been an accomplice of the Carrick smugglers, and to have been a receiver of contraband goods.

Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
And win the key-stane * of the brig; reach
There, at them thou thy tail may toss:
A running stream they dare na cross.
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fient a tail she had to shake! No tail had she
For Nannie, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle: endeavour
But little wist she Maggie's mettle—
Ae spring brought off her master hale whole
But left behind her ain grey tail:
The carlin claught her by the rump, clutched
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk man and mother's son, take heed:
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
Or cutty sarks run in your mind,
Think! ye may buy the joys o'er dear,
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

It appears that Burns originally sent his Alloway-Kirk witch-stories to Captain Grose in a plain prose recital:

TO FRANCIS GROSE, ESQ.

Among the many witch-stories I have heard relating to Aloway kirk, I distinctly remember only two or three:—

Upon a stormy night, amid whistling squalls of wind and bitter blasts of hail; in short, on such a night as the devil would chuse to take the air in; a farmer or farmer's servant was plodding and plashing homeward with his plough irons on his shoulder, having been getting some repairs on them at a neighbouring smithy. His way lay by the kirk of Aloway and being rather on the anxious look-out in approaching a place so well known to be a favorite haunt of the devil and the devil's friends and emissaries, he was struck aghast by discovering through the horrors of the storm and stormy night, a light which, on his nearer approach, plainly shewed itself to proceed from the haunted edifice.

* It is a well-known fact that witches, or any evil spirits, have no power to follow a poor wight any farther than the middle of the next running-stream. It may be proper likewise to mention to the benighted traveller, that when he falls in with *bogles*, whatever danger may be in his going forward, there is much more hazard in turning back.—*B.*

Whether he had been fortified from above on his devout supplication, as is customary with people when they suspect the immediate presence of Satan; or whether, according to another custom, he had got courageously drunk at the smithy, I will not pretend to determine; but so it was that he ventured to go up to, nay into, the very kirk. As good luck would have it his temerity came off unpunished.

The members of the infernal junto were all out on some midnight business or other and he saw nothing but a kind of kettle or caldron, depending from the roof, over the fire, simmering some heads of unchristened children, limbs of executed malefactors, &c., for the business of the night. It was in for a penny, in for a pound, with the honest ploughman: so without ceremony he unhooked the caldron from off the fire, and pouring out the damnable ingredients, inverted it on his head and carried it fairly home, where it remained long in the family, a living evidence of the truth of the story.

Another story, which I can prove to be equally authentic, was as follows:—

On a market day in the town of Ayr, a farmer from Carrick and consequently whose way lay by the very gate of Aloway kirk-yard, in order to cross the river Doon at the old bridge, which is about two or three hundred yards farther on than the said gate, had been detained by his business till by the time he reached Aloway it was the wizard hour between night and morning.

Though he was terrified with a blaze streaming from the kirk, yet as it is a well-known fact that to turn back on these occasions is running by far the greatest risk of mischief, he prudently advanced on his road. When he had reached the gate of the kirk-yard, he was surprised and entertained, through the ribs and arches of an old gothic window, which still faces the highway, to see a dance of witches merrily footing it round their old sooty blackguard master, who was keeping them all alive with the power of his bagpipe. The farmer, stopping his horse to observe them a little, could plainly descry the faces of many old women of his acquaintance and neighbourhood. How the gentleman was dressed, tradition does not say; but the ladies were all in their smocks, and one of them happening unluckily to have a smock which was considerably too short to answer all the purpose of that piece of dress, our farmer was so tickled that he involuntarily burst out, with a loud laugh, 'Weel luppen [well leaped], Maggy wi' the short sark!' and recollecting himself, instantly spurred his horse to the top of his speed. I need not mention the universally-known fact that no diabolical power can pursue you beyond the middle of a running stream. Lucky it was for the poor farmer that the river Doon was so near, for notwithstanding the speed of his horse, which was a good one, against he reached the middle of the arch of the bridge and consequently the middle of the stream, the pursuing vengeful hags were so close at his heels that one of them actually sprung to seize him; but it was too late, nothing was on her side of the stream but the horse's tail, which immediately gave way at her infernal grip, as

if blasted by a stroke of lightning; but the farmer was beyond her reach. However, the unsightly, tail-less condition of the vigorous steed was to the last hour of the noble creature's life an awful warning to the Carrick farmers not to stay too late in Ayr markets.

The last relation I shall give, though equally true, is not so well identified as the two former, with regard to the scene; but as the best authorities give it for Aloway, I shall relate it:—

On a summer's evening, about the time that nature puts on her sables to mourn the expiry of the cheerful day, a Shepherd boy belonging to a farmer in the immediate neighbourhood of Aloway Kirk had just folded his charge and was returning home. As he passed the kirk, in the adjoining field, he fell in with a crew of men and women, who were busy pulling stems of the plant Ragwort. He observed that as each person pulled a Ragwort, he or she got astride of it and called out 'up horsie!' on which the Ragwort flew off, like Pegasus, through the air with its rider. The foolish boy likewise pulled his Ragwort and cried with the rest 'up, horsie!' and, strange to tell, away he flew with the company. The first stage at which the cavalcade stopt was a Merchant's wine cellar in Bordeaux, where, without saying by your leave, they quaffed away at the best the cellar could afford, until the morning, foe to the imps and works of darkness, threatened to throw light on the matter and frightened them from their carousals.

The poor shepherd lad, being equally a stranger to the scene and the liquor, heedlessly got himself drunk; and when the rest took horse, he fell asleep and was found so next day by some of the people belonging to the Merchant. Somebody that understood Scotch, asking him what he was, he said he was such-a-one's herd in Aloway, and by some means or other getting home again, he lived long to tell the world the wondrous tale.—I am, &c., &c., R. B.*

It is commonly believed in Ayrshire that there was a real Tam and a real Souter Johnny, and that the poem was based on a fiction of Tam's. The traditional belief, to which allusion has already been made (Vol. I., p. 49), is that 'the hero was an honest farmer named Douglas Graham, who lived at Shanter, between Turnberry and Culzean. His wife, Helen M'Taggart, was very superstitious and irritable. Graham, dealing in malt, went to Ayr every market-day, whither he was frequently accompanied by a shoemaking neighbour, John Davidson,† originally of Glenfoot in Ardlochan, who had settled in Kirkos-

* This letter was communicated by Mr Gilchrist, of Stamford, to Sir Egerton Brydges, by whom it was published in the *Censura Literaria*, 1796.

† Thomas Reid, an Ayrshire man, who worked as a labourer at Lochwinnoch early in the century, and John Laughton, a shoemaker, who lies buried in Alloway churchyard, have also been claimed as the originals of 'Tam' and the 'Souter.'

wald, John dealing a little in leather. The two would often linger to a late hour in the taverns at the market-town. In the High Street, Ayr, there still stands the "Tam o' Shanter" Tavern, which claims to have been the scene of the memorable orgie. One night, when riding home alone later than usual, in a storm of wind and rain, Graham, in passing over Brown Carrick Hill near the Bridge of Doon, lost his bonnet, which contained the money which he had drawn that day at the market. To avoid the scolding of his wife, he imposed upon her credulity with a story of witches seen at Alloway Kirk, but did not fail to return to the Carrick Hill to seek for his money, which he had the satisfaction to find with his bonnet in a plantation near the road. It is supposed that Burns, when in his youth living among the Carrick farmers at Kirkoswald, became acquainted with Graham and Davidson, studied their eccentric habits, and heard of their various adventures, including that of Alloway Kirk, though perhaps without learning that it was a husband's imposition upon a too credulous wife.' *

Mrs Dunlop had this summer lost a son-in-law. Her daughter Susan had married a French gentleman named Henri (or Henry), of good birth and fortune, and the young couple lived happily at Loudoun Castle, in Ayrshire. On June 22d, Henri succumbed to a severe cold. His wife gave birth to a son and heir in the subsequent November.†

TO MRS DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, *November* 1790.

'As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.' Fate, or Providence, or whatever is the true Appellation for the Power

* Douglas Graham (born 1738, died 1811) and John Davidson (born 1728, died 1806), the supposed originals of Tam o' Shanter and Souter Johnny, are buried in the churchyard of Kirkoswald. Of Douglas Graham, Dr Charles Rogers (*The Book of Robert Burns*, vol. i.) writes: 'Our friend, Mrs Finlay of Helensburgh, a nonagenarian, knew Douglas Graham in her childhood, and describes him as a fine-looking old man with a sanguine complexion; he wore a wig and talked humorously.' Of John Davidson, Dr Roger writes: 'The Souter was reputed for his jests and smart sayings. When some one asked him whether he did not apprehend that in the progress of discovery shoemaking might cease, he quaintly answered, "My craft will continue so long as calves are born with heads and bairns are born barefoot." Douglas Graham's wife died in 1798 at the age of 56.'

† 'November 15th, 1790. Birth, at Loudoun Castle, Mrs Henry, widow of James Henry, Esq. of Bernadean, of a son.'—*Scots Magazine.*

who presides over and directs the affairs of this our world has long owed me a letter of good news from you, in return for the many tidings of sorrow and woe which I have received from you. In this instance I most cordially obey the apostle—'Rejoice with them that do rejoice.' For me *to sing* for joy is no new thing; but *to preach* for joy, as I have done in the commencement of this Epistle, is a pitch of extravagant rapture to which I never rose before.

I read your letter—I literally *jumped for joy*—how could such a mercurial creature as a Poet lumpishly keep his seat on the receipt of the best news from his best Friend?—I seized my gilt-headed Wangee * rod, an instrument indispensably necessary, in my left hand, in the moment of Inspiration and rapture—and stride—stride—quick and quicker—out skipt I among the broomy banks of Nith to muse over my joy by retail. To keep within the bounds of Prose was impossible. Mrs Little's is a more elegant, but not a more sincere, Compliment to the sweet little fellow than I, extempore almost, poured out to him in the following verses:—

ON THE BIRTH OF A POSTHUMOUS CHILD, BORN IN PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF FAMILY-DISTRESS.

Sweet flow'ret, pledge o' meikle love (much)
And ward o' mony a prayer,
What heart o' stane wad thou na move,
Sae helpless, sweet and fair!

November hirples o'er the lea, (limps)
Chill, on thy lovely form;
And gane, alas! the shelt'ring tree
Should shield thee frae the storm!

May He, who gives the rain to pour
And wings the blast to blaw,
Protect thee frae the driving show'r,
The bitter frost and snaw!

May He, the friend of woe and want,
Who heals life's various stounds, (pangs)
Protect and guard the mother plant
And heal her cruel wounds!

* *Wanghee* or *whangee* is a trade name for a slender yellow cane imported from Japan.

But late she flourish'd, rooted fast,
Fair on the summer morn,
Now feebly bends she in the blast—
Unshelter'd and forlorn.

Blest be thy bloom, thou lovely gem,
Unscath'd by ruffian hand!
And from thee many a parent-stem
Arise to deck our Land!*

I am much flattered by your approbation of my 'Tam o' Shanter,' which you express in your former letter; tho', by the bye, you load me in that said letter with accusations heavy and many, to all which I plead, *Not guilty!* Your book† is, I hear, on the road to reach me. As to the printing of Poetry: when you prepare it for the Press you have only to spell it right and place the capital letters properly, as to the punctuation, the Printers do that themselves.

I have a copy of 'Tam o' Shanter' ready to send you by the first opportunity: it is too heavy to send by Post.

I heard of Mr Corbet‡ lately. He, in consequence of your recommendation, is most zealous to serve me. Please favor me soon with an account of your good folks; if Mrs Henri is recovering, and the young gentleman doing well. I am ever, my dear Friend and honored Patroness, Yours sincerely, ROBT. BURNS.

The subsequent history of Mrs Henri and her son is in some points worth telling. In a subsequent letter, Burns deplores her dangerous and distressing situation in France, exposed to the tumults of the Revolution; and he has soon after occasion to condole with his venerable friend on the death of her daughter. The orphan child fell under the immediate care of his paternal grandfather, who, however, was soon obliged to take refuge in Switzerland, leaving the infant behind him. Years passed; he and the Scotch friends of the child heard nothing of it, and concluded that it was lost. At length, when the elder Henri was enabled to return to his estates, he had the satisfaction of finding that his grandson and heir was alive and well, having

* This poem was first published in the *Scots Magazine* for December 1793.

† Mrs Dunlop was about to print for private circulation a few sketches of her own, in prose and verse.

‡ One of the Supervisors-general of Excise.

never been removed from the place. The child had been protected and reared with the greatest care by a Mademoiselle Susette, formerly a domestic in the family, who supported him by her own industry, and never allowed the youngster to forget that he was an 'aristocrat.' He afterwards succeeded to the family estates, and Mademoiselle Susette spent the rest of her days in the mansion in honour and comfort.

CHAPTER III.

ELLISLAND, 1791.

BURNS was now very busy with his excise duties, but he did not allow many days of the new year to pass before writing to two of his Edinburgh friends. The tone of these letters is depressing. Burns writes like a man who was not only oppressed with work and care, but who was not at peace with himself. Such feelings it will subsequently be seen Burns had only good reason to cherish. Even this will hardly account for 'the hearty blast of execration' in the letter to Hill which he says 'is to the mind what breaking a vein is to the body.' There is reason to believe that about this time Burns had been insulted—or fancied he had been insulted—by 'some man of family and fortune' in Dumfriesshire, whose name, however, has not been made known.

TO WILLIAM DUNBAR, ESQ., W.S.

ELLISLAND, 17*th January* 1791.

I am not gone to Elysium, most noble Colonel,* but am still here in this sublunary world, serving my God by propagating his image and honouring my king by begetting him loyal subjects.

Many happy returns of the season await my friend! May the thorns of care never beset his path! May peace be an inmate of his bosom and rapture a frequent visitor of his soul! May the bloodhounds of misfortune never track his steps nor the screech-owl of sorrow alarm his dwelling! May enjoyment tell thy hours and pleasure number thy days, thou friend of the Bard! 'Blessed be he that blesseth thee and cursed be he that curseth thee!!!'

* So styled as president of the Crochallan Fencibles.

As a further proof that I am still in the land of existence, I send you a poem,* the latest I have composed. I have a particular reason for wishing you only to show it to select friends, should you think it worthy a friend's perusal; but if, at your first leisure hour, you will favour me with your opinion of, and strictures on, the performance, it will be an additional obligation on, Dear Sir, Your deeply indebted humble servant, R. B.

TO MR PETER HILL.

Ellisland, 17*th January* 1791.

Take these three † guineas and place them over against that damned account of yours, which has gagged my mouth these five or six months! I can as little write good things as write apologies to the man I owe money to. O the supreme curse of making three guineas do the business of five! Not all the labors of Hercules; not all the Hebrews' three centuries of Egyptian bondage, were such an insuperable business, such an infernal task!!

Poverty! thou half-sister of Death, thou cousin-german of Hell! where shall I find force of execration equal to thy demerits? By thee, the venerable Ancient, though in this insidious obscurity grown hoary in the practice of every virtue under heaven, now laden with years and wretchedness, implores from a stony-hearted son of Mammon, whose sun of prosperity never knew a cloud, a little, little aid to support his very existence and is by him denied and insulted. By thee, the man of sentiment, whose heart glows with independence and melts with sensibility, inly pines under the neglect, or writhes, in bitterness of soul, under the contumely of arrogant, unfeeling wealth. By thee, the man of Genius, whose ill-starred ambition plants him at the tables of the fashionable and polite, must see, in suffering silence, his remark neglected and his person despised, while shallow Greatness, in his idiot attempts at wit, shall meet with countenance and applause. Nor is it only the family of Worth that have reason to complain of thee: the children of Folly and Vice, though in common with thee the offspring of Evil, smart equally under thy rod. Owing to thee, the man of unfortunate disposition and neglected education is condemned as a fool for his dissipation; despised and shunned as a needy wretch when his follies, as usual, have brought him to want; and when his unprincipled necessities drive him to dishonest practices, he is abhorred as a miscreant and perishes by the justice of his country.

But far otherwise is the lot of the man of family and fortune. *His* early extravagances and follies are fire and spirit; *his* consequent wants are the embarrassments of an honest fellow; and when, to remedy the matter, he sets out with a legal commission to plunder distant provinces

* 'Tam o' Shanter.'

† In the original account Hill enters £3, 3s. to Burns's credit under January 20, 1791, leaving a balance to debit of £3, 7s. 5d.

and massacre peaceful nations, he returns laden with the spoils of rapine and murder; lives wicked and respected, and dies a Villain and a Lord. Nay, worst of all -alas for helpless woman! the needy wretch who was shivering at the corner of the street, waiting to earn the wages of casual prostitution, is ridden down by the chariot-wheels of the Coroneted RIP, hurrying on to the adulterous assignation; she who, without the same necessities to plead, riots nightly in the same guilty trade!!!

Well! divines may say of it what they please; but I maintain that a hearty blast of execration is to the mind what breaking a vein is to the body; the overloaded sluices of both are wonderfully relieved by their respective evacuations. I feel myself vastly easier than when I began my letter and can now go on to business. You will be so good then as send, by the first Dumfries carrier, all, or as many as you have by you, of the following books. I am, &c. R. B.

It would appear that by this time Burns's little capital was all but exhausted, and then he had begun to be just a little behindhand with the world. He certainly was easy about money down to the early part of 1790, when he offered assistance to his youngest brother William. Even in the fall of that year, when William's death in London made an unexpected call upon him, payment was promptly made.* We learn from this letter that Burns had for some months before the close of 1790 been inconveniently short of cash. It is, nevertheless, equally true and curious that Burns figured at this period as an accommodator or creditor. The debtor was Alexander Crombie, a builder at Dalswinton, who had erected the farm-edifices at Ellisland, and whom Burns had probably found to be a good man struggling with the difficulties of inadequate capital. A bill was drawn by Burns for £20, under date 'Dumfries, December 15, 1790,' at three months, and accepted by Crombie. It was indorsed by Burns to Mr David Staig, provost of Dumfries, and agent for the Bank of Scotland. An instrument of protest for non-payment of this bill, drawn up on the 18th of March 1791, shows that Crombie had not been ready to withdraw it at the proper time. This, after the lapse of some time, had been intimated to the poet by a letter from Mr James Gracie, an officer in the bank.

* This appears from a letter found among Burns's papers: 'To Mr ROBERT BURNS.—Sir, I received your favour of the 5th instant this day, containing a bill for the money expended in your deceased brother's sickness and funeral. Wishing you all health and happiness, I am, sir, your very humble servant, W. BARBER.—*Strand, Oct.* 8, 1790.'

TO JAMES GRACIE, ESQ., BANKER.

GLOBE INN, 8 *o'clock* P.M.

SIR—I have your letter anent Crombie's bill. Your forbearance has been very great. I did it to accommodate the thoughtless fellow. He asks till Wednesday week. If he fail, I pay it myself. In the meantime, if horning and caption be absolutely necessary, *grip him by the neck, and welcome.* Yours, ROBERT BURNS.

It may also be mentioned that Peter Hill signed a quittance for payment in full to Burns, on 5th December 1791, when the poet was probably somewhat more in funds by the sale of his farming effects. The sum was £8, 16s. 8d. The books which Burns had obtained were the following: *Letters on the Religion Essential to Man; Peregrine Pickle; Count Fathom; Launcelot Greaves;* a *Family Bible* (£2); Johnson's *English Dictionary,* 8vo edition; Shakespeare; Ossian's *Poems;* Smellie's *Philosophy of Natural History; The World;* Garrick's Works; Cibber's Works—all of these prior to March 6, 1790; the remainder on the 20th January 1791—*The Adventurer; Arabian Nights' Entertainments; Joseph Andrews; Roderick Random; The Scots Worthies; Marrow of Modern Divinity;* Cole *On God's Sovereignty;* Newton's *Letters; Confession of Faith;* Boyle's *Voyages;* Blair's *Sermons;* Guthrie's *Grammar;* Buchan's *Domestic Medicine;* Price *On Providence and Prayer; Don Quixote; The Idler.* The amount includes £1, 11s. 6d. for a copy of Ainslie's Map of Scotland, on rollers.

TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.

ELLISLAND, 23*d January* 1791.

Many happy returns of the season to you, my dear friend! As many of the good things of this life as is consistent with the usual mixture of good and evil in the cup of Being!

I have just finished a poem ['Tam o' Shanter'] which you will receive enclosed. It is my first essay in the way of tales.

I have these several months been hammering at an elegy on the amiable and accomplished Miss Burnet.* I have got, and can get, no further than the following fragment, on which please give me your strictures. In all kinds of poetic composition, I set great store by your opinion; but in sentimental verses, in the poetry of the heart, no Roman Catholic ever set more value on the infallibility of the Holy Father than I do on yours.

I mean the introductory couplets as text verses.

* Miss Burnett died of consumption, 17th June 1790.

ELEGY

ON THE LATE MISS BURNET OF MONBODDO.

Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize
As Burnet, lovely from her native skies;
Nor envious Death so triumph'd in a blow
As that which laid th' accomplish'd Burnet low.

Thy form and mind, sweet Maid, can I forget!
In richest ore the brightest jewel set!
In thee, high Heaven above was truest shown,
As by His noblest work the Godhead best is known.

In vain ye flaunt in summer's pride, ye groves!
Thou crystal streamlet with thy flowery shore,
Ye woodland choir that chant your idle loves,
Ye cease to charm: Eliza is no more!

Ye heathy wastes, immix'd with reedy fens;
Ye mossy streams, with sedge and rushes stor'd;
Ye rugged cliffs, o'erhanging dreary glens,
To you I fly—ye with my soul accord.

Princes, whose cumbrous pride was all their worth,
Shall venal lays their pompous exit hail;
And thou, sweet Excellence! forsake our earth
And not a Muse with honest grief bewail!

We saw thee shine in youth and beauty's pride,
And Virtue's light, that beams beyond the spheres;
But like the sun eclips'd at morning-tide
Thou left'st us, darkling in a world of tears.

The Parent's heart that nestled fond in thee,
That heart how sunk, a prey to grief and care!
So deckt the woodbine sweet yon aged tree;
So, rudely ravish'd, left it bleak and bare!*

Let me hear from you soon. Adieu! ROBT. BURNS.

* The last verse was not given in the letter to Cunningham. The poet added it on sending a copy of the poem to Mrs Dunlop. (See succeeding letter.)

TO MRS DUNLOP.

Ellisland, *7th February* 1791.

When I tell you, Madam, that by a fall, not from my horse but with my horse, I have been a cripple some time, and that this is the first day my arm and hand have been able to serve me in writing; you will allow that it is too good an apology for my seemingly ungrateful silence. I am now getting better and am able to rhyme a little, which implies some tolerable ease, as I cannot think that the most poetic genius is able to compose on the rack.

I do not remember if ever I mentioned to you my having an idea of composing an elegy on the late Miss Burnet of Monboddo. I had the honor of being pretty well acquainted with her and have seldom felt so much at the loss of an acquaintance as when I heard that so amiable and accomplished a piece of God's works was no more. I have as yet gone no farther than the following fragment, of which please let me have your opinion. You know that elegy is a subject so much exhausted, that any new idea on the business is not to be expected: 'tis well if we can place an old idea in a new light. How far I have succeeded as to this last, you will judge from what follows.

[Elegy on the late Miss Burnet of Monboddo.]*

I have proceeded no further.

Your kind letter, with your kind *remembrance* of your godson, came safe. The last, Madam, is scarcely what my pride can bear. As to the little fellow, he is, partiality apart, the finest boy I have of a long time seen. He is now seventeen months old, has the small-pox and measles over, has cut several teeth and yet never had a grain of doctor's drugs in his bowels.

I am truly happy to hear that the 'little floweret' is blooming so fresh and fair and that the 'mother-plant' is rather recovering her drooping head. Soon and well may her 'cruel wounds' be healed! I have written thus far with a good deal of difficulty. When I get a little abler you shall hear further from, Madam, Yours,

R. B.

The Rev. Archibald Alison, for many years minister of one of the Episcopal chapels in Edinburgh, had in 1790 published *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*, which, in advocating the 'association' theory of the Sublime and Beautiful, have enjoyed something more than an ephemeral celebrity. Having met Burns in Edinburgh in 1789, he sent a copy of the book to Ellisland.

* See p. 231 : 'Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize.'

TO THE REV. ARCHIBALD ALISON, EDINBURGH.*

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, 14*th Feb.* 1791.

SIR—You must by this time have set me down as one of the most ungrateful of men. You did me the honor to present me with a book, which does honor to science and the intellectual powers of man, and I have not even so much as acknowledged the receipt of it. The fact is, you yourself are to blame for it. Flattered as I was by your telling me that you wished to have my opinion of the work, the old spiritual enemy of mankind, who knows well that vanity is one of the sins that most easily beset me, put it into my head to ponder over the performance with the look-out of a critic and to draw up, forsooth, a deep-learned digest of strictures on a composition of which, in fact, until I read the book, I did not even know the first principles. I own, Sir, that at first glance several of your propositions startled me as paradoxical. That the martial clangor of a trumpet had something in it vastly more grand, heroic and sublime than the twingle-twangle of a Jew's-harp; that the delicate flexure of a rose-twig, when the half blown flower is heavy with the tears of the dawn, was infinitely more beautiful and elegant than the upright stub of a burdock; and that from something innate and independent of all associations of ideas;—these I had set down as irrefragable, orthodox truths, until perusing your book shook my faith. In short, Sir, except Euclid's *Elements of Geometry*, which I had made a shift to unravel by my father's fire-side, in the winter evenings of the first season I held the plough, I never read a book which gave me such a quantum of information and added so much to my stock of ideas as your *Essays on the Principles of Taste*. One thing, Sir, you must forgive my mentioning as an uncommon merit in the work: I mean the language. To clothe abstract philosophy in elegance of style sounds something like a contradiction in terms; but you have convinced me that they are quite compatible.

I inclose you some poetic bagatelles of my late composition.† The one in print is my first essay in the way of telling a tale. I am, Sir, &c. R. B.

This is the letter which Dugald Stewart, in a communication to Currie, says he read with some surprise, as proving that Burns,

* Archibald Alison (1757–1839), born in Edinburgh; educated at Glasgow University and Balliol College, Oxford; took Anglican orders in 1784; after holding various preferments in England removed to Edinburgh; retired from the Episcopal ministry in 1831. He was father of Sir Archibald Alison (1792–1867) the historian; and grandfather of General Sir Archibald Alison (born 1826), who led the Highland Brigade at the battle of Tel-el-Kebir.

† 'From my earliest years I had entertained the utmost admiration for the Scottish bard. I had an hereditary right to do so; for my father, who was intimately acquainted with him, was so impressed with his genius while he was as yet unknown to fame that he kept the original copy of "Auld Lang Syne," which the bard gave him, till it literally fell to pieces in his waistcoat-pocket.'—Sir Archibald Alison's *Some Account of My Life and Writings*, vol. ii., p. 239.

although he had not received a university education, had formed 'a distinct conception of the several principles of the doctrine of *association.*'

TO MRS GRAHAM OF FINTRY.

[ELLISLAND, *February* 1791.]

MADAM—Whether it is that the story of our Mary Queen of Scots has a peculiar effect on the feelings of a poet or whether I have in the inclosed ballad succeeded beyond my usual poetic success, I know not; but it has pleased me beyond any effort of my muse for a good while past: on that account I inclose it particularly to you. It is true the purity of my motives may be suspected. I am already deeply indebted to Mr Graham's goodness; and, what *in the usual ways of men* is of infinitely greater importance, Mr G. can do me service of the utmost importance in time to come. I was born a poor dog; and however I may occasionally pick a better bone than I used to do, I know I must live and die poor: but I will indulge the flattering faith that my poetry will considerably outlive my poverty; and without any fustian affectation of spirit I can promise and affirm that it must be no ordinary craving of the latter shall ever make me do any thing injurious to the honest fame of the former. Whatever may be my failings, for failings are a part of human nature, may they ever be those of a generous heart and an independent mind. It is no fault of mine that I was born to dependence; nor is it Mr Graham's chiefest praise that he can command influence; but it is his merit to bestow, not only with the kindness of a brother but with the politeness of a gentleman; and I trust it shall be mine to receive with thankfulness and remember with undiminished gratitude.

R. B.

LAMENT OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS, ON THE APPROACH OF SPRING.

Now Nature hangs her mantle green
  On every blooming tree,
And spreads her sheets o' daisies white
  Out o'er the grassy lea;
Now Phœbus cheers the crystal streams
  And glads the azure skies:
But nought can glad the weary wight
  That fast in durance lies.

Now laverocks wake the merry morn, larks
Aloft on dewy wing;
The merle, in his noontide bow'r, blackbird
Makes woodland echoes ring;
The mavis mild wi' many a note thrush
Sings drowsy day to rest:
In love and freedom they rejoice,
Wi' care nor thrall opprest.

Now blooms the lily by the bank,
The primrose down the brae; slope
The hawthorn 's budding in the glen
And milk-white is the slae: sloe
The meanest hind in fair Scotland
May rove their sweets amang;
But I, the Queen of a' Scotland,
Maun lie in prison strang. Must

I was the Queen o' bonie France,
Where happy I hae been;
Fu' lightly rase I in the morn,
As blythe lay down at e'en:
And I 'm the sov'reign of Scotland,
And mony a traitor there!
Yet here I lie in foreign bands
And never-ending care.

But as for thee, thou false woman,
My sister and my fae, foe
Grim vengeance yet shall whet a sword
That thro' thy soul shall gae! go
The weeping blood in woman's breast
Was never known to thee,
Nor th' balm that draps on wounds of woe
Frae woman's pitying e'e.

My son! my son! may kinder stars
Upon thy fortune shine;
And may those pleasures gild thy reign
That ne'er wad blink on mine! shine

God keep thee frae thy mother's faes
Or turn their hearts to thee;
And where thou meet'st thy mother's friend,
Remember him for me!

O! soon, to me, may summer-suns
Nae mair light up the morn!
Nae mair to me the autumn winds
Wave o'er the yellow corn!
And in the narrow house o' death
Let winter round me rave;
And the next flow'rs that deck the spring
Bloom on my peaceful grave.

TO DR JOHN MOORE.

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, 28*th Feb.* 1791.

I do not know, Sir, whether you are a subscriber to Grose's *Antiquities of Scotland*. If you are, the inclosed poem will not be altogether new to you. Captain Grose did me the favor to send me a dozen copies of the proof-sheet, of which this is one. Should you have read the piece before, still this will answer the principal end I have in view: it will give me another opportunity of thanking you for all your goodness to the rustic bard; and also of shewing you that the abilities you have been pleased to commend and patronize are still employed in the way you wish.

The 'Elegy on Captain Henderson' is a tribute to the memory of a man I loved much. Poets have in this the same advantage as Roman Catholics; they can be of service to their friends after they have past that bourne where all other kindness ceases to be of avail. Whether, after all, either the one or the other be of any real service to the dead is, I fear, very problematical; but I am sure they are highly gratifying to the living: and as a very orthodox text, I forget where, in Scripture, says 'Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin,' so say I, whatsoever is not detrimental to society and is of positive enjoyment, is of God, the giver of all good things, and ought to be received and enjoyed by his creatures with thankful delight. As almost all my religious tenets originate from my heart, I am wonderfully pleased with the idea that I can still keep up a tender intercourse with the dearly-beloved friend or still more dearly-beloved mistress who is gone to the world of spirits.

The ballad on Queen Mary was begun while I was busy with Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry*. By the way, how much is every honest heart which has a tincture of Caledonian prejudice obliged to you for your glorious story of *Buchanan and Targe!* 'Twas an unequivocal proof

of your loyal gallantry of soul, giving 'Targe' the victory. I should have been mortified to the ground if you had not.* What a rocky-hearted, perfidious succubus was that Queen Elizabeth! Judas Iscariot was a sad dog to be sure, but still his demerits sink to insignificance compared with the doings of the infernal Bess Tudor. Judas did not know, at least was by no means sure, what and who that Master was: his turpitude was simply betraying a worthy man who had ever been a good Master to him, a degree of turpitude which has ever been undone by many of his kind since. Iscariot, poor wretch, was a man of nothing at all per annum, and by consequence, thirty pieces of silver was a very serious temptation to *him*. But, to give but one instance, the Duke of Queensberry, the other day, just played the same trick to *his* kind master, tho' his Grace is a man of thirty thousand a year and come to that imbecile period of life when no temptation but avarice can be supposed to affect him.

I have just read over, once more of many times, your *Zeluco*.† I marked with my pencil, as I went along, every passage that pleased me particularly above the rest; and one, or two I think, which, with humble deference, I am disposed to think unequal to the merits of the book. I have sometimes thought to transcribe these marked passages, or at least so much of them as to point where they are, and send them to you. Original strokes that strongly depict the human heart is your and Fielding's province, beyond any other novelist I have ever perused. Richardson, indeed, might perhaps be excepted; but, unhappily, his *dramatis personæ* are beings of some other world; and, however they may captivate the inexperienced, romantic fancy of a boy or a girl, they will ever, in proportion as we have made human nature our study, dissatisfy our riper years.

As to my private concerns, I am going on, a mighty tax-gatherer before the Lord and have lately had the interest to get myself ranked on the list of excise as a supervisor. I am not yet employed as such, but in a few years I shall fall into the file of supervisorship by seniority. I have had an immense loss in the death of the Earl of Glencairn, the patron from whom all my fame and good fortune took its rise. Independent of my

* In Dr Moore's novel, Buchanan represents the Lowland Puritan feeling of Scotland, Targe the Cavalier Highland spirit. In a fight arising from a quarrel about the honour of Queen Mary, Targe is victor. It will readily be believed that Burns approved of the final deliverance of the defeated Buchanan on Queen Mary: 'I will freely admit that the most innocent person that ever lived or the greatest hero recorded in history could not face death with greater composure than the queen of Scotland; she supported the dignity of a queen, while she displayed the meekness of a Christian.'

† Burns presented his copy of *Zeluco* to Mrs Dunlop, with the inscription on the fly-leaf: 'To my much esteemed friend Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop.—Robt. Burns.' There are a few pencilled notes on the margin. In the twelfth chapter of the novel a lady's-maid, in supporting the claims of a bashful suitor to the hand of her mistress, a widow, affirms, 'Rather than open his mouth to you on the subject, he will certainly die.' 'Die! nonsense,' cried the widow. 'Yes, die!' cried the maid, 'and what is worse, die in a dark lanthorn; at least, I am told that is what he is in danger of.' This passage is annotated by Burns: 'Rather a bad joke—an unlucky attempt at humour.'

grateful attachment to him, which was indeed so strong that it pervaded my very soul and was entwined with the thread of my existence, so soon as the prince's friends * had got in (and every dog, you know, has his day) my getting forward in the Excise would have been an easier business than otherwise it will be. Though this was a consummation devoutly to be wished, yet, thank Heaven, I can live and rhyme as I am; and as to my boys, poor little fellows! if I cannot place them on as high an elevation in life as I could wish, I shall, if I am favored so much by the Disposer of events as to see that period, fix them on as broad and independent a basis as possible. Among the many wise adages which have been treasured up by our Scottish ancestors this is one of the best, *Better be the head o' the commonalty than the tail o' the gentry.*

But I am got on a subject which, however interesting to me, is of no manner of consequence to you; so I shall give you a short poem on the other page and close this with assuring you how sincerely I have the honor to be, Yours, &c. R. B.

[Written on the blank leaf of a book which I presented to a very young lady whom I had formerly characterised under the denomination of 'The Rosebud.'

Beauteous Rosebud, young and gay,† &c.]

Dr Moore's answer to this letter contained some conventional criticism on 'Tam o' Shanter' and the 'Elegy on Matthew Henderson,' with some sound worldly advice: 'I cannot help thinking you imprudent in scattering abroad so many copies of your verses. It is most natural to give a few to confidential friends, particularly to those who are connected with the subject or who are perhaps themselves the subject; but this ought to be done under promise not to give other copies. Of the poem you sent me on Queen Mary, I refused every solicitation for copies; but I lately saw it in a newspaper. My motive for cautioning you on this subject is that I wish to engage you to collect all your fugitive pieces not already printed, and after they have been re-considered and polished to the utmost of your power, I would have you publish them by another subscription; in promoting of which I will exert myself with pleasure.'

Burns seems never to have been willing to listen to any such counsel. To write poetry for the purpose of making money by it was positively abhorrent to him; to publish a second volume of poems like the first, would, he feared, expose him to the mortification of hearing it pronounced inferior. He still, as in the old

* The Whigs, who were the Regent's partisans.

† See Vol. II., p. 200.

Mossgiel days, 'rhymed for fun;' or if he acknowledged other motives, they were not mercenary. He was ever ready, for example, to do what he could to oblige or gratify a friend. At this time it was proposed to publish a new edition * of the works of the poor, ill-starred schoolmaster-poet, Michael Bruce, who had died of consumption, poverty, and misery at the age of twenty-one, nine years after Burns was born. The lead in this was taken by the Rev. George Husband Baird, who on 8th February wrote to Burns:

May I beg to know if you will take the trouble of perusing the manuscripts—of giving your opinion and suggesting what curtailments, alterations or amendments occur to you as advisable? And will you allow us to let it be known that a few lines by you will be added to the volume?

Burns replied with the generous offer of all his unpublished poems:

TO THE REV. GEORGE H. BAIRD, LONDON.†

[ELLISLAND, *February* 1791].

Why did you, my dear Sir, write to me in such a hesitating style on the business of poor Bruce? Don't I know, and have I not felt, the many ills, the peculiar ills, that poetic flesh is heir to? You shall have your choice of all the unpublished poems I have, and had your letter had my direction so as to have reached me sooner (it only came to my hand this moment), I should have directly put you out of suspense on the subject. I only ask that some prefatory advertisement in the book, as well as the subscription bills, may bear that the publication is solely for the benefit of Bruce's mother. I would not put it in the power of ignorance to surmise, or malice to insinuate, that I clubbed a share in the work from mercenary motives. Nor need you give me credit for any remarkable generosity in my part of the business. I have such a host of peccadilloes, failings, follies and backslidings (any body but myself might perhaps give some of them a worse appellation), that by way of some balance, however trifling, in the account, I am fain to do any good that occurs in my very limited power to a fellow-creature, just for the selfish purpose of clearing a little the vista of retrospection. R. B.

Accordingly the following prospectus was at once issued:

PROSPECTUS OF A NEW EDITION OF POEMS BY MICHAEL BRUCE.

By subscription, speedily will be published, price three shillings, by J. Forbes, Covent Garden, London, a new edition of Poems by the late

* The first edition of the poems was published by the Rev. John Logan in 1770.

† Rev. George H. Baird (1761–1840) was in 1791 minister of Dunkeld. Succeeded (1793) Robertson as Principal of Edinburgh University. His chief work was the improvement of education in the Highlands.

Michael Bruce, to which will be subjoined a few select pieces by Robert Burns. The profits which may arise from this publication are to be employed solely for the support of Michael Bruce's mother.

Nevertheless, the edition of Bruce subsequently published did not contain any poems by Burns. Mr. John Small, lately librarian of Edinburgh University—who took the side of Logan as against Bruce in the controversy as to the authorship of the 'Ode to the Cuckoo'—discovered from Principal Baird's papers why Burns's offer (which embraced several of his best unpublished poems, including 'Tam o' Shanter') was not accepted. It was 'in consequence of the opposition of Dr Blair and Dr Moore, who argued that from the moral tendency of Bruce's poetry, the insertion of Burns's "Alloway Kirk" would be as gross a violation of propriety as the exhibition of a farce after a tragedy.'

TO MR ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 11*th March* 1791.

My dear Cunningham—I received your *first* letter two days ago; the last came to hand this moment. I was highly delighted with the well-carried-on allegory in your friend's letter. I read it to two or three acquaintances who have souls to enjoy a good thing and we had a very hearty laugh at it. I have felt along the line of my Muse's inclination and I fear your Archery subject would be uphill work with her. I have two or three times in my life composed from the wish, rather than from the impulse, but I never succeeded to any purpose. One of these times I shall ever remember with gnashing of teeth. 'Twas on the death of the late Lord President Dundas. My very worthy and most respected friend, Mr Alex. Wood, Surgeon, urged me to pay a compliment in the way of my trade to his Lordship's memory.* Well, to work I went and produced a copy of Elegaic verses, some of them, I own, rather common-place and others rather hide-bound, but on the whole, though they were far from being in my best manner, they were tolerable and might have been thought very clever. I wrote a letter which, however, *was* in my very best manner; and inclosing my poem, Mr Wood carried all together to Mr Solicitor Dundas that then was and not finding him at home, left the parcel for him. His Solicitorship never took the smallest notice of the letter, the Poem or the Poet. From that time, highly as I respect the talents of their family, I never see the name Dundas in the column of a newspaper but my heart seems straitened for room in my bosom; and if I am obliged to read aloud a paragraph relating to one of them, I feel

* See Vol. II., pp. 222-224.

my forehead flush and my nether lip quiver. Had I been an obscure scribbler, as I was then in the hey-day of my fame; or had I been a dependent hanger-on for favour or pay; or had the bearer of the letter been any other than a gentleman who has done honor to the city in which he lives, to the country that produced him and to the God that created him, Mr Solicitor might have had some apology—but enough of this ungracious subject.

A friend of mine who transcribed the last parcel I sent you is to be with me in a day or two and I shall get him to copy out the two poems you mention. I have this evening sketched out a song * which I had a great mind to send you, though I foresee that it will cost you another groat of postage—by the way, you once mentioned to me a method of franking letters to you, but I have forgot the direction. My song is intended to sing to a strathspey or reel, of which I am very fond, called in Cumming's collection of strathspeys, 'Ballendalloch's Reel,' and in other collections that I have met with it is known by the name of 'Camdelmore.' It takes three stanzas of four lines each to go through the whole tune. I shall give the song to Johnson for the fourth volume of his publication of Scots songs, which he has just now in hand.

If the foregoing piece be worth your strictures, let me have them. For my own part, a thing that I have just composed always appears through a double portion of that partial medium in which an Author will ever view his own works. I believe, in general, Novelty has something in it that inebriates the fancy and not unfrequently dissipates and fumes away like other intoxication and leaves the poor patient, as usual, with an aching heart. A striking instance of this might be adduced in the revolution of many a Hymeneal honeymoon. But lest I sink into stupid prose and so sacrilegiously intrude on the office of my Parish-priest, who is in himself one vast Constellation of dulness, and from his weekly Zenith rays out his contradictory stupidity to the no small edification and enlightening of the heavy and opaque pericraniums of his gaping admirers, I shall fill up the page in my own way and give you another song of my late composition which will appear in Johnson's work as well as the former. You must know a beautiful Jacobite air —'There 'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.' When political combustion ceases to be the object of Princes and Patriots, it then, you know, becomes the lawful prey of Historians and Poets.

THERE 'LL NEVER BE PEACE TILL JAMIE COMES HAME.

By yon castle wa', at the close of the day,
I heard a man sing, tho' his head it was grey;
And as he was singing, the tears down came,—
There 'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.

* The song was 'Sweet are the banks—the banks o' Doon.' See *infra*, p. 345.

The Church is in ruins, the State is in jars,
Delusions, oppressions and murderous wars,
We dare na weel say 't, but we ken wha 's to blame,—
There 'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.

My seven braw sons for Jamie drew sword,
And now I greet round their green beds in the yerd; earth
It brak the sweet heart of my faithfu' auld dame,—
There 'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.

Now life is a burden that bows me down,
Sin I tint my bairns and he tint his crown; lost
But till my last moments my words are the same,—
There 'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.

If you like the air and if the stanzas fit your fancy, you cannot imagine, my dear friend, how much you would oblige me if, by the charms of your delightful voice, you would give my honest effusion to 'the memory of joys that are past' to the few friends whom you indulge in that pleasure. But I have scribbled on till I hear the clock has intimated the near appreach of

That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane.

So good-night to you! And sound be your sleep and delectable your dreams! Apropos, how do you like this thought in a ballad I have just now on the tapis?

I look to the west when I gae to rest,
That happy my dreams and my slumbers may be;
For far in the west lives he I lo'e best—
The lad that is dear to my babie and me!

Good night, once more; and God bless you! ROBT. BURNS.

It will be observed from this letter that Burns attributes his intense dislike to the name of 'Dundas' to the cavalier treatment which, as he imagined, he had received from at least one member of the politically 'reigning family.' But it is not improbable that by this time he had learned that Henry Dundas, the 'uncrowned King of Scotland,' was not specially well affected towards himself. Such at all events is the impression that must be formed from a careful perusal of a curious newspaper controversy in London, which may most suitably be introduced here, although it had

taken place almost two years before the letter to Cunningham was written.

In *Stuart's Star* of Friday, March 27, 1789, there appeared an anonymous communication, headed

THE DUCHESS OF GORDON.

'What mighty matters rise from trivial things!'

The *chalky* hue of the Drawing-room is ascribed to the Duchess of Gordon's influence!

We mean not to insinuate that her dress was a *make-up;* but, true it is, she figured at a ball in one very similar the other year at Edinburgh.

Mr Burns, the ploughing poet, who owes much of his good fortune to her Grace's critical discernment and generous patronage, made this elegant stanza on that occasion:

She was the mucklest of them aw;	greatest—all
Like SAUL she stood the Tribes aboon;	above
Her gown was whiter than the snaw,	
Her face was redder than the moon.	

Some interest seems to have been aroused by the paragraph, for only four days later another appeared:

THE DUCHESS OF GORDON.

A Correspondent, who calls himself the friend of Mr Burns, the Ayrshire bard, assures us we have been misinformed about the verses on the Duchess of Gordon's appearance at the ball in Edinburgh.

He affirms that the bard says not a word of King Saul nor her Grace's *auld gown*, but celebrates her well-known faculty of *reel-dancing*, which, in spite of some late insinuations to the contrary, she still possesses in perfection.

He sends the following specimen of Mr Burns's performance and offers to produce the entire poem, if required, in evidence.

She kiltit up her kirtle weel,	tucked up—skirt
To shew her bonny cutes sae sma';	ankles
And wallopèd about the reel,	
The lightest louper o' them a'.	jumper=dancer

While some like slav'ring doited stots	stupid
Stowt'ring out thro' the midden dub	Stumbling—puddle
Fankit their heels amang their coats	Entangled
And gart the floor their backsides rub.	made

Gordon the great, the gay, the gallant,
Skipt like a mauk'n o'er a dike : hare—wall
De'il tak me, since I was a calant, lad
Gif e'er my e'en beheld the like ! If

R. BURNS.

Remark.—These verses certainly appear to be genuine. They are full of animation and pastoral imagery. We therefore intreat our former correspondent to substantiate his story of the *auld gown* or ingenuously to confess his deception.

Four more days passed, and matters became so complicated that the publisher appealed to Burns to settle the point :

THE DUCHESS OF GORDON.

Our first correspondent, in relation to the affair of Mr Burns and the Duchess of Gordon, has called at the office and obstinately supported the authenticity of his communication. With commendable spirit he has even left his name, with full liberty of publication. He styles himself Dr Theodore Theobald Theophilus Tripe, and we understand he belongs to the honourable body of peripatetic physicians. He affirms that the poem in dispute was given him by the Author last summer, at Mauchline, a town in Ayrshire.

Our remark that the verses sent by our second correspondent are such as Mr Burns might have written, the Doctor allows to be just ; but asks, by what rule of logic we can argue from the possibility to the certainty of a thing.

He shrewdly observes, however, that Mr Burns, whose partiality to the fair sex has been so frequently proclaimed by himself, would not probably have compared the Ladies of Edinburgh to stupid bullocks stumbling in a slough, merely because they did not jump quite so high as his noble patroness.

We regret he would not leave the entire manuscript with us, which is of considerable length. The two following stanzas were all that we could for the present obtain :

Aft to the glens, and ilka shiel hut
Whar Dees in leglans milk their cows, dairy-maids—milk-pails
At e'en I gaed, and loo'd fu' weel
To kiss their bonny brukit mows. tempting mouths

But frae thy mow, O Gordon fair !
Could I but get ae kiss sae frisky,
For a' the sharney * queans in Ayr
I wadna gi' a glass of whisky !

* *Sharney* = the person in charge of cows.

Our opinions on this interesting subject are once more thrown into perplexity: and nothing is left us but to solicit, which we earnestly do, the authority, by letter, of Mr Burns himself, to remove the anxiety of the Public, by a certain and final decision.

The humour of this fooling, which is quite as much at the expense of the Duchess of Gordon as of Burns, is remarkable for breadth rather than delicacy. But the lines first given in *Stuart's Star*, on March 27, were copied into another London newspaper, the *Gazetteer*, on the following day. It was after their appearance in the *Gazetteer* that Burns first heard of them; probably he had to thank his friend Cunningham for bringing them under his notice.* He then wrote

TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE GAZETTEER.'

SIR—By accident I met with your Paper of March the 28th, in which there are four disrespectful lines on the Duchess of Gordon that you tell us are the composition of 'Mr Burns, the ploughing poet,' who, as you at the same time remind the world, 'owes much of his good fortune to her Grace's patronage.' I am that Burns, Sir; and I affirm that the wretched Stanza in question is not mine, nor do I know any thing of the Author. It is indeed true that I have the honour to be deeply indebted to the Duchess of Gordon's goodness, and for that reason I now write to you: had you only forged dullness on me I should not have thought it worth while to reply, but to add ingratitude too is what I cannot in silence bear. In justice to the private character of a man, which must suffer much by your injurious imputation, allow me, Sir, to insist on your retracting your assertion of my being the Author of those verses.

I am, Sir, your injured humble servant, ROBERT BURNS.

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, *April* 10, 1789.

To this letter the editor of the *Gazetteer* appended a note:

Mr Burns will do right in directing his petulance to the proper delinquent, the Printer of *The Star*, from which Paper the Stanza was literally copied into *The Gazetteer*. We can assure him, however, for his comfort, that the Duchess of Gordon acquits him both of the ingratitude and the dullness. She has, with much difficulty, discovered that the *Jeu d'Esprit* was written by the Right honourable the Treasurer of the Navy, on her Grace's dancing at a ball given by the Earl of Findlater; this has been found out by the industry and penetration of Lord Fife. The lines are certainly not so dull as Mr Burns insinuates, and we fear he is jealous of the poetical talents of his rival, Mr Dundas.

* See Burns's letter to Cunningham, 4th May 1789, Vol. III., pp. 70, 71.

Meanwhile, Burns had learned that the other verses had been ascribed to him in the columns of the *Star*. Three days later he wrote to Stuart:

MR PRINTER—I was much surprised last night on being told that some silly verses on the Duchess of Gordon, which had appeared in a late Paper of yours, were said to be my composition. As I am not a Reader of any *London Newspaper*, I have not yet been able to procure a sight of that paper. I know no more of the matter than what a friend of mine, from having slightly glanced over the paragraph, could recollect; but this I know, I am not the author of the verses in question. My friend told me that the Printer himself expressed a doubt whether the poem was mine: I thank you, Sir, for that doubt. A Conductor of another London paper was not so candid when he lately inserted a disrespectful stanza on the same highly-respectable personage, which he, with unqualified assurance, asserted to be mine; though in fact, I never composed a line on the Duchess of Gordon in my life. I have such a sense of what I personally owe to her Grace's benevolent patronage and such a respect for her exalted character that I have never yet dared to mention her name in any composition of mine, from a despair of doing justice to my own feelings.

I have been recollecting over the sins and trespasses, peccadilloes and backslidings of myself and my forefathers, to see if can guess why I am thus visited and punished with this vile calumny; to be, at one time, falsely accused of the two most damning crimes of which, as a man and as a poet, I could have been guilty—INGRATITUDE and STUPIDITY.

I beg of you, Sir, that in your very first paper you will do justice to my injured character with respect to those verses, falsely said to be mine; and please mention further that in the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* of March 28, another forgery of the like nature was committed on me, in publishing a disrespectful stanza on the Duchess of Gordon. I have written to the Conductor of that Paper, remonstrating on the injury he has done me; but lest from some motive or other he should decline giving me that redress I crave, if you will undeceive the Public, by letting them know, through the channel of your universally-known paper, that I am guiltless of either the one or the other miserable piece of rhyme, you will much oblige, Sir,
Your very humble servant, ROBERT BURNS.

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, *April* 13 [1789].

These letters are not of great importance as throwing fresh light upon the life of Burns. But they indicate his sensitiveness as regards both his character as a man and his reputation as a poet. It may be said, indeed, that in them he makes much ado about very little. It should however be remembered that at the time

he wrote them he was striving to obtain an excise appointment, and such an attack on the Duchess of Gordon as his name had been put to would injure him in quarters where he desired to stand well. Hence no doubt the emphasis of his disclaimers. If the Gordon skit was really written by 'the great dispenser of patronage' in Scotland, it must be regarded as indicating the reverse of respect for the character of Burns, who is represented as the 'ploughing poet,' fond of women and whisky, and capable of ridiculing a patroness in verse. In any case, the newspaper incident must have given Burns a strong impression that Henry Dundas was no warm friend or admirer of his, and would not facilitate his rapid promotion. Yet so long as the Earl of Glencairn lived, he could rely upon his influence and the loyal though not effusive friendship of Graham of Fintry.

Near the end of January, however, Glencairn, on his return from a futile voyage to Lisbon in search of health, died at Falmouth in the forty-second year of his age. The poet put on mourning for his friend, and designed, if possible, to attend his funeral in Ayrshire.* At a later time, gratitude and respect for the memory of the Earl led him to call one of his sons James Glencairn. At this time he composed a

LAMENT FOR JAMES, EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

The wind blew hollow frae the hills,
  By fits the sun's departing beam
Look'd on the fading yellow woods
  That wav'd o'er Lugar's winding stream:
Beneath a craigy steep, a Bard,
  Laden with years and meikle pain, much
In loud lament bewail'd his lord,
  Whom death had all untimely taen.

He lean'd him to an ancient aik, oak
  Whose trunk was mould'ring down with years,
His locks were bleachèd white with time,
  His hoary cheek was wet wi' tears;

* Lord Glencairn is buried in the chancel of the church at Falmouth.

And as he touch'd his trembling harp,
And as he tun'd his doleful sang,
The winds, lamenting thro' their caves,
To echo bore the notes alang:

'Ye scatter'd birds that faintly sing,
The reliques of the vernal quire!
Ye woods that shed on a' the winds
The honours of the agèd year!
A few short months, and, glad and gay,
Again ye 'll charm the ear and e'e;
But nocht in all revolving time
Can gladness bring again to me.

'I am a bending agèd tree,
That long has stood the wind and rain;
But now has come a cruel blast,
And my last hold of earth is gane:
Nae leaf o' mine shall greet the spring,
Nae simmer sun exalt my bloom;
But I maun lie before the storm, must
And ithers plant them in my room.

'I 've seen sae mony changefu' years,
On earth I am a stranger grown:
I wander in the ways of men,
Alike unknowing and unknown:
Unheard, unpitied, unreliev'd,
I bear alane my lade o' care,
For silent, low, on beds of dust,
Lie a' that would my sorrows share.

'And last, (the sum of a' my griefs!)
My noble master lies in clay;
The flow'r amang our barons bold,
His country's pride, his country's stay:
In weary being now I pine,
For a' the life of life is dead,
And hope has left my agèd ken,
On forward wing for ever fled.

'Awake thy last sad voice, my harp!
The voice of woe and wild despair!
Awake! resound thy latest lay,
Then sleep in silence evermair!
And thou, my last, best, only friend,
That fillest an untimely tomb,
Accept this tribute from the Bard
Thou brought from fortune's mirkest gloom. darkest

'In Poverty's low barren vale,
Thick mists, obscure, involv'd me round;
Though oft I turn'd the wistful eye,
Nae ray of fame was to be found:
Thou found'st me, like the morning sun
That melts the fogs in limpid air:
The friendless Bard and rustic song
Became alike thy fostering care.

'O! why has worth so short a date,
While villains ripen grey with time!
Must thou, the noble, gen'rous, great,
Fall in bold manhood's hardy prime!
Why did I live to see that day—
A day to me so full of woe?
O! had I met the mortal shaft
Which laid my benefactor low!

'The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestreen;
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee;
But I 'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And a' that thou hast done for me!'

LINES SENT TO SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD, BART. OF WHITEFOORD, WITH THE FOREGOING POEM.

Thou, who thy honour as thy God rever'st,
Who, save thy mind's reproach, nought earthly fear'st,
To thee this votive off'ring I impart,
The tearful tribute of a broken heart.
The *Friend* thou valued'st, I the *Patron* lov'd;
His worth, his honour, all the world approved.
We 'll mourn till we, too, go as he has gone,
And tread the shadowy path to that dark world unknown.

On the same subject Burns wrote the two following letters. Mr Dalziel was Lord Glencairn's *factor* or land-agent, and had been instrumental in bringing the poet to the notice of his master.

TO MR ALEXANDER DALZIEL, FACTOR, FINLAYSTON.*

ELLISLAND, *March* 10, 1791.

MY DEAR SIR—I have taken the liberty to frank this letter to you, as it encloses an idle poem of mine which I send you; and God knows you may perhaps pay dear enough for it if you read it through. Not that this is my own opinion; but an author by the time he has composed and corrected his works has quite pored away all his powers of critical discrimination.

I can easily guess, from my own heart, what you have felt on a late most melancholy event. God knows what I have suffered at the loss of my best friend, my first, my dearest patron and benefactor; the man to whom I owe all that I am and have! I am gone into mourning for him; and with more sincerity of grief than I fear some will who by nature's ties ought to feel on the occasion.

I will be exceedingly obliged to you, indeed, to let me know the news of the noble family, how the poor mother and the two sisters support their loss. I had a packet of poetic bagatelles ready to send to Lady Betty, when I saw the fatal tidings in the newspaper. I see by the same channel that the honored REMAINS of my noble patron are designed to be brought to the family burial-place. Dare I trouble you to let me know privately before the day of interment, that I may cross the country and steal among the crowd, to pay a tear to the last sight of my ever-revered benefactor? It will oblige me beyond expression.

R. B.

* Finlayston House, in the parish of Kilmalcolm, Renfrewshire, was the seat of the Glencairns.

TO LADY ELIZABETH CUNNINGHAM.

[ELLISLAND, *March* 1791.]

MY LADY—I would, as usual, have availed myself of the privilege your goodness has allowed me, of sending you any thing I compose in my poetical way; but as I had resolved, so soon as the shock of my irreparable loss would allow me, to pay a tribute to my late benefactor, I determined to make *that* the first piece I should do myself the honor of sending you. Had the wing of my fancy been equal to the ardour of my heart, the inclosed had been much more worthy your perusal: as it is, I beg leave to lay it at your ladyship's feet.* As all the world knows my obligations to the late Earl of Glencairn, I would wish to shew as openly that my heart glows, and shall ever glow, with the most grateful sense and remembrance of his lordship's goodness. The sables I did myself the honor to wear to his lordship's memory were not the 'mockery of woe.' Nor shall my gratitude perish with me:—If, among my children, I shall have a son that has a heart, he shall hand it down to his child as a family honor and a family debt, that my dearest existence I owe to the noble house of Glencairn!

I was about to say, my lady, that if you think the poem may venture to see the light, I would, in some way or other, give it to the world. . . .

R. B.

But Lady Betty simply referred the Poet to her sister, to whom a copy of the 'Lament' was accordingly forwarded. The poem was inscribed 'To Lady Harriet Don, this Poem, not the fictitious creation of poetic fancy, but the breathings of real love from a bleeding heart, is respectfully and gratefully presented by THE AUTHOR.'

TO LADY HARRIOT DON.

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, 23*d Oct.* 1791.

MY LADY—The inclosed is a tribute to the memory of a Man the memory of whom shall mix with my latest recollection. As all the world knows my obligation to the late noble Earl of Glencairn, I wish to make my gratitude equally conspicuous by publishing this Poem. But in what way shall I publish it? It is too small a piece to publish alone. The way which suggests itself to me is to send it to the Publisher of one of the most respectable periodical works—*The Bee*, for instance. Lady Betty has referred me to you. The Post is just going, else I would have taken the opportunity of the frank and sent your Ladyship some of my late pieces. I have the honor to be, my Lady, your Ladyship's grateful, humble Servant, ROBT. BURNS.

* The poem enclosed was the 'Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn.'

The following letter to Hill shows that Burns did not forget his more intimate friends in Edinburgh.

TO MR PETER HILL.

Ellisland [*March* 1791].*

My dear Hill—I shall say nothing at all to your mad present: you have long and often been of important service to me and I suppose you mean to go on conferring obligations until I shall not be able to lift up my face before you. In the mean time, as Sir Roger de Coverley, because it happened to be a cold day in which he made his will, ordered his servants great coats for mournings, so, because I have been this week plagued with an indigestion, I have sent you by the carrier a fine old ewe-milk cheese.

Indigestion is the devil: nay, 'tis the devil and hell. It besets a man in every one of his senses. I lose my appetite at the sight of successful Knavery, and sicken to loathing at the noise and nonsense of self-important Folly. When the hollow-hearted wretch takes me by the hand, the feeling spoils my dinner; the proud man's wine so offends my palate that it chokes me in the gullet; and the *pulvilis'd*,† feathered, pert coxcomb is so horrible in my nostril that my stomach turns.

If ever you have any of these disagreeable sensations, let me prescribe for your Patience a bit of my Cheese. I know that you are no niggard of your good things among your friends, and some of them are in much need of a slice. There, in my eye, is our friend Smellie; a man positively of the first abilities and greatest strength of mind, as well as one of the best hearts and keenest wits that I ever met with; when you see him—as, alas! he too often is, smarting at the pinch of distressful circumstance aggravated by the sneer of contumelious greatness, a bit of my cheese alone will not cure him, but if you add a tankard of brown stout and superadd a magnum of right Oporto, you will see his sorrows vanish like the morning mist before the summer sun.

Candlish, the earliest friend, except my only brother, that I have on earth, and one of the worthiest fellows that ever any man called by the name of Friend, if a luncheon of my cheese would help to rid him of some of his superabundant modesty, you would do well to give it him.

David [Ramsay], with his *Courant*, comes, too, across my recollection, and I beg you will help him largely from the said ewe-milk cheese, to enable him to digest those damn'd bedaubing paragraphs with which he is eternally larding the lean characters of certain great men in a certain great town. I grant you the periods are very well turned; so, a fresh egg

* The MS. of this letter is undated. Currie placed it in 1789, but the indirect allusion in 'my only brother' to the death of William Burns, which took place in 1790, proves him to have been in error. 'The Duke of Queensberry's late political conduct' may be an allusion to 'Old Q's' action at the time of the Regency Bill.

† Pulvil was a perfumed powder largely used at this time.

is a very good thing, but when thrown at a man in a pillory, it does not at all improve his figure, not to mention the irreparable loss of the egg.

My facetious little friend, Colonel Dunbar, I would wish also to be a partaker: not to digest his spleen, for that he laughs off, but to digest his last night's wine at the last field-day of the Crochallan corps.

Among our common friends I must not forget one of the dearest of them, Cunningham. The brutality, insolence and selfishness of a world unworthy of having such a fellow as he in it, I know sticks in his stomach, and if you can help him to any thing that will make him a little easier on that score, it will be very obliging.

As to honest John Somerville, he is such a contented, happy man, that I know not what can annoy him, except perhaps he may not have got the better of a parcel of modest anecdotes which a certain poet gave him one night at supper, the last time the said poet was in town.

Though I have mentioned so many men of Law, I shall have nothing to do with them professionally—the Faculty are beyond my prescription. As to their *clients*, that is another thing; God knows they have much to digest!

The clergy I pass by: their profundity of erudition and their liberality of sentiment; their total want of pride and their detestation of hypocrisy, are so proverbially notorious as to place them far, far above either my praise or censure.

I was going to mention a man of worth whom I have the honor to call friend, the Laird of Craigdarroch; but I have spoken to the landlord of the King's Arms inn here, to have at the next county meeting, a large ewe-milk cheese on the table, for the benefit of the Dumfriesshire Whigs, to enable them to digest the Duke of Queensberry's late political conduct.

I have just this moment an opportunity of a private hand to Edinburgh, as perhaps you would not digest double postage. So, God bless you! ROBT. BURNS.

In the latter part of March, Burns fell from his horse, and broke his right arm. Janet Little, the 'Scottish milkmaid,' was waiting at Ellisland to see him. She has related, in simple verse, what has been described as 'her own painful alarm when the news came—the sympathy with which she regarded the tears of his affectionate Jean—and the double embarrassment she experienced in greeting in such circumstances the illustrious poet whom she had formerly trembled to meet at all.' * In the course of a few weeks the Poet had so far recovered as to be able to write.

Shortly after, Mrs Burns gave birth to a third son, to whom was given the name of William Nicol.

* *Contemporaries of Burns*, p. 82.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 11*th April* 1791.

I am once more able, my honoured friend, to return you, with my own hand, thanks for the many instances of your friendship, and particularly for your kind anxiety in this last disaster that my evil genius had in store for me. However, life is chequered—joy and sorrow—for on Saturday morning last [the 9th] Mrs Burns made me the present of a fine boy, rather stouter, but not so handsome as your godson was at his time of life. Indeed, I look on your little namesake to be my *chef d'œuvre* in that species of manufacture, as I look on 'Tam o' Shanter' to be my standard performance in the poetical line. 'Tis true, both the one and the other discover a spice of roguish waggery that might perhaps be as well spared; but then they also show, in my opinion, a force of genius and a finishing polish that I despair of ever excelling. Mrs Burns is getting stout again, and laid as lustily about her to-day at breakfast as a reaper from the corn-ridge. That is the peculiar privilege and blessing of our hale, sprightly damsels that are bred among the *hay and heather*. We cannot hope for that highly-polished mind, that charming delicacy of soul, which is found among the female world in the more elevated stations of life, and which is certainly by far the most bewitching charm in the famous cestus of Venus. It is indeed such an inestimable treasure, that where it can be had in its native heavenly purity, unstained by some one or other of the many shades of affectation and unalloyed by some one or other of the many species of caprice, I declare to Heaven I should think it cheaply purchased at the expense of every other earthly good! But as this angelic creature is, I am afraid, extremely rare in any station and rank of life, and totally denied to such an humble one as mine, we meaner mortals must put up with the next rank of female excellence—as fine a figure and face we can produce as any rank of life whatever; rustic, native grace; unaffected modesty and unsullied purity; nature's mother-wit and the rudiments of taste; a simplicity of soul, unsuspicious of, because unacquainted with, the crooked ways of a selfish, interested, disingenuous world; and the dearest charm of all the rest, a yielding sweetness of disposition and a generous warmth of heart, grateful for love on our part and ardently glowing with a more than equal return: these, with a healthy frame, a sound, vigorous constitution, which your higher ranks can scarcely ever hope to enjoy, are the charms of lovely woman in my humble walk of life.

This is the greatest effort my broken arm has yet made. Do let me hear, by first post, how *cher petit Monsieur** comes on with his small pox.† May Almighty goodness preserve and restore him! R. B.

P.S.—In a letter I had lately from Dr Moore, he bids me to remember him to you and to beg of you not to think that his friendship flags when

* Mrs Henri's child, the grandchild of Mrs Dunlop.

† Inoculation is here meant, of course.

his pen lies still. He says, except on business he now seldom lifts a pen at all. But this is from myself: the devil take such apathy of Friendship!!! R. B.

Alexander Fraser Tytler,* son of the Mr William Tytler with whom Burns had corresponded, was, as we have already seen, a man of letters in Edinburgh. Having read 'Tam o' Shanter,' he was so much pleased with it that he immediately wrote the poet:

FROM ALEXANDER FRASER TYTLER, ESQ.

EDINBURGH, 12*th March* 1791.

DEAR SIR—Mr Hill yesterday put into my hands a sheet of Grose's *Antiquities* containing a poem of yours, entitled 'Tam o' Shanter: a Tale.' The very high pleasure I have received from the perusal of this admirable piece, I feel, demands the warmest acknowledgments. Hill tells me he is to send off a packet for you this day; I cannot resist, therefore, putting on paper what I must have told you in person had I met with you after the recent perusal of your tale, which is, that I feel I owe you a debt which, if undischarged, would reproach me with ingratitude. I have seldom in my life tasted of higher enjoyment from any work of genius than I have received from this composition; and I am much mistaken if this poem alone, had you never written another syllable, would not have been sufficient to have transmitted your name down to posterity with high reputation. In the introductory part, where you paint the character of your hero and exhibit him at the ale-house *ingle*, with his tippling cronies, you have delineated nature with a humour and *naïveté* that would do honour to Matthew Prior; but when you describe the infernal orgies of the witches' sabbath and the hellish scenery in which they are exhibited, you display a power of imagination that Shakespeare himself could not have exceeded. I know not that I have ever met with a picture of more horrible fancy than the following:

> 'Coffins stood round, like open presses,
> That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
> And, by some devilish cantraip sleight,
> Each in its cauld hand held a light.'

But when I came to the succeeding lines, my blood ran cold within me:

> 'A knife a father's throat had mangled—
> Whom his ain son o' life bereft—
> *The grey hairs yet stack to the heft.*'

And here, after the two following lines, 'Wi' mair of horrible and awefu',' &c., the descriptive part might perhaps have been better closed

* Alexander Fraser Tytler (1747–1813), better known by his title of Lord Woodhouselee.

than the four lines which succeed, which, though good in themselves, yet, as they derive all their merit from the satire they contain, are here rather misplaced among the circumstances of pure horror.* The initiation of the young witch is most happily described—the effect of her charms exhibited in the dance on Satan himself—the apostrophe, 'Ah little thought thy reverend grannie!'—the transport of Tam, who forgets his situation and enters completely into the spirit of the scene—are all features of high merit in this excellent composition. The only fault it possesses is that the winding-up, or conclusion, of the story is not commensurate to the interest which is excited by the descriptive and characteristic painting of the preceding parts. The preparation is fine, but the result is not adequate. But for this, perhaps, you have a good apology—you stick to the popular tale.

And now that I have got out my mind and feel a little relieved of the weight of that debt I owed you, let me end this desultory scroll by an advice: You have proved your talent for a species of composition in which but a very few of our own poets have succeeded. Go on—write more tales in the same style—you will eclipse Prior and La Fontaine; for, with equal wit, equal power of numbers and equal naïveté of expression, you have a bolder and more vigorous imagination. I am, dear sir, with much esteem, Yours &c., A. F. T.

TO ALEXANDER FRASER TYTLER, ESQ.

Ellisland, [*April*] 1791.

Sir—Nothing less than the unfortunate accident I have met with could have prevented my grateful acknowledgments for your letter. His own favorite poem, and that an essay in the walk of the muses entirely new to him, where consequently his hopes and fears were on the most anxious alarm for his success in the attempt—to have that poem so much applauded by one of the first judges was the most delicious vibration that ever trilled along the heart-strings of a poor poet. However, Providence, to keep up the proper proportion of evil with the good, which it seems is necessary in this sublunary state, thought proper to check my exultation by a very serious misfortune. A day or two after I received your letter, my horse came down with me and broke my right arm. As this is the first service my arm has done me since its disaster, I find myself unable to do more than just in general terms to thank you for this additional instance of your patronage and friendship. As to the faults you detected in the piece, they are truly there: one of them, the

* The four lines were

> 'Three lawyers' tongues, turn'd inside out,
> Wi' lies seam'd like a beggar's clout; ragged covering
> Three priests' hearts, rotten, black as muck, dung
> Lay stinking, vile, in every neuk.'

The poet deleted them.

hit at the lawyer and priest, I shall cut out: as to the falling off in the catastrophe, for the reason you justly adduce it cannot easily be remedied. Your approbation, sir, has given me such additional spirits to persevere in this species of poetic composition, that I am already revolving two or three stories in my fancy. If I can bring these floating ideas to bear any kind of embodied form, it will give me an additional opportunity of assuring you how much I have the honor to be, &c. R. B.

While laid up with his broken arm, Burns had the pleasure of receiving a valuable mark of regard from his fellow-Jacobite, Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable, in the form of a snuff-box, containing on the lid an inlaid miniature of Queen Mary.

TO LADY WINIFRED MAXWELL CONSTABLE.

My Lady—Nothing less than the unlucky accident of having lately broken my right arm could have prevented me, the moment I received your Ladyship's elegant present by Mrs Miller, from returning you my warmest and most grateful acknowledgments. I assure your Ladyship I shall set it apart: the symbols of Religion shall only be more sacred. In the moment of poetic composition the box shall be my inspiring genius. When I would breathe the comprehensive wish of benevolence for the happiness of others, I shall recollect your Ladyship; when I would interest my fancy in the distresses incident to humanity, I shall remember the unfortunate Mary. I enclose your Ladyship a poetic compliment I lately paid to the memory of our greatly-injured, lovely Scottish Queen. I have the honor to be, my Lady, your Ladyship's highly obliged and ever devoted, humble servant,

Bobt. Burns.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 25*th April* 1791.

Many years after, one of the poet's sons, having taken this box with him to India, had the misfortune to damage the portrait irreparably in leaping on board a vessel.

It was at this time that Burns completed his collection* of manuscript poems for his friend Riddel. The title reads 'Poems written by Mr Robert Burns, and Selected by him from his unprinted Collection for Robert Riddel, of Glenriddel, Esq.'

Preface.

'As this Collection almost wholly consists of pieces local or unfinished, fragments the effusion of a poetical moment; and

* Particulars of this collection appear in Appendix No. IV.

bagatelles strung in rhyme simply *pour passer le temps*, the Author trusts that nobody into whose hands it may come will, without his permission, give, or allow to be taken, copies of any thing here contained; much less to give to the world at large* what he never meant should see the light. At the Gentleman's request, whose from this time it shall be, the Collection was made; and to him, and, I will add, to his amiable Lady, it is presented, as a sincere, though small, tribute of gratitude for the many, many happy hours the Author has spent under their roof. *There*, what Poverty, even though accompanied with Genius, must seldom expect to meet with at the tables and in the circles of Fashionable Life, his welcome has ever been the cordiality of Kindness and the warmth of Friendship. As from the situation in which it is now placed, these MSS. may be preserved, and this Preface read, when the hand that now writes and the heart that now dictates it may be mouldering in the dust; let these be regarded as the genuine sentiments of a man who seldom flattered any, and never those he loved.

ROBT. BURNS.

27*th April* 1791.'

TO MR ALEXR. COUTTS, WHITEHAVEN.

DEAR SIR—I am much your debtor for your two elegant epistles. I had written you long ago but I still hoped my Muse would enable me to answer you *in kind;* but the Muses are capricious gipseys, at least I have ever found them so. In the meantime I send you this verse, like other poor devils who are in debt, to beg a little time—'Have patience, and I will pay thee all.' I shall reprobate my Muse to all eternity, if she do not very soon inspire me to tell you in Verse how sincerely I am, Dear Sir, Yours, ROBT. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, 28*th April* 1791.

TO MR JOHN SOMERVILLE, WRITER, EDINBURGH.†

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, 11*th May* 1791.

ALLOW me, my dear Sir, to introduce a Mr Lorimer,‡ a particular friend of mine, to your acquaintance, as a gentleman worth your knowing, both

* How Burns's wishes in this matter have been treated is now only too notorious.

† John Somerville, already mentioned, was an intimate Edinburgh friend of Burns, and subscribed for four copies of the first Edinburgh edition.

‡ Here Burns alludes to William Lorimer, father of the subsequently-celebrated 'Chloris,' who was then a girl of sixteen. Of him Mrs Burns writes that he was farmer at Kemishall and in good circumstances.

as a man and (what is case in point) as a man of property and consequence, who goes to town just now, to advise with and employ an Agent in some law-business. By way of serving him, I put him in the best hands when I introduce him to Mr Somerville. My kindest compliments to Mrs Somerville, little Harry, and all your little folks. By the way, about ten months ago, I collected * * * * a little fellow, whom, for strength, size, figure and pitch of note, I will match against any boy in Nithsdale, Annandale or any dale whatever. So, in a mug of porter, here goes the Gudewife o' Diltammies' toast—'The Gudeman an' the bill! for they keep a' the toun in milk.' Yours, ROBT. BURNS.

TO MR THOMAS SLOAN, DUMFRIES.

I am truly sorry, my dear Sir, that my black mare has hurt one of her hind legs so ill that she cannot travel, else she should have been at your service. Many thanks for your attentions. I much wish to see you. I called on Captain Riddel to-day, who inquired kindly for you; he is getting better.

Excuse this brief epistle from a broken arm. Yours, R. B.

P.S.—I have recruited my purse since I saw you, and you may have a guinea or two if you chuse.

Before Burns had been long recovered from the fall by which his arm was broken, he seems to have met with another misfortune —this time an accident to one of his legs. He had at the same time finally decided to give up his farm, a step which he deemed necessary in order to escape ruin, and to which he was, of course, the less averse that he still expected speedy promotion in the Excise.

TO MR PETER HILL.

[*Summer* 1791.]

MY DEAR FRIEND—I was never more unfit for writing. A poor devil, nailed to an elbow-chair, writing in anguish with a bruised leg laid on a stool before him, is in a fine situation truly for saying bright things.

I may perhaps see you about Martinmas. I have sold to my landlord the lease of my farm, and as I roup off everything then, I have a mind to take a week's excursion to see old acquaintance. At all events, you may reckon on [payment of] your account about that time. So much for business. I do not know if I ever informed you that I am now ranked on the list as a supervisor, and I have pretty good reason to believe that I shall soon be called out to employment. The appointment

is worth from one to two hundred a year, according to the place of the country in which one is settled. I have not been so lucky in my farming. Mr Miller's kindness has been just such another as Creech's—but this for your private ear:

> His meddling vanity, a busy fiend,
> Still making work his selfish craft must mend.

By the way I have taken a damned vengeance on Creech. He wrote me a fine, fair letter telling me that he was going to print a third edition; and as he had a brother's care of my fame, he wished to add every new thing I have written since, and I should be amply rewarded with—a copy or two to present to my friends! He has sent me a copy of the last edition* to correct, &c., but I have as yet taken no notice of it, and I hear he has published without me. You know, and all my friends know, that I do not value money; but I owed the gentleman a debt, which I am happy to have it in my power to repay.

Farewell, and prosperity attend all your undertakings! I shall try, if my unlucky limb would give me a little ease, to write you a letter a little better worth reading. Put the enclosed to post. R. B.

TO ———

[ELLISLAND, 1791.]

DEAR SIR—I am exceedingly to blame in not writing you long ago; but the truth is that I am the most indolent of all human beings, and when I matriculate in the Herald's Office, I intend that my supporters shall be two sloths; my crest, a slow-worm; and the motto, 'Deil tak the foremost.' So much by way of apology for not thanking you sooner for your kind execution of my commission.

I would have sent you the poem;† but somehow or other it found its way into the public paper, where you must have seen it. . . .

I am, ever, dear Sir, yours sincerely, ROBERT BURNS.

TO MR ALEXANDER FINDLATER.

DEAR SIR—I am both much surprised and vexed at that accident to Lorimer's stock. The last survey I made, prior to Mr Lorimer's going to

* Creech had advertised a new edition of Burns's *Poems* in July 1790. In September 1791, Mr Davies (of Cadell & Davies, publishers, London) wrote to Creech: 'Mr Cadell says he believes he wrote you about the new edition of Burns's *Poems;* but in case he has not, he bids me tell you, sir, that he recommends 1000 to be printed in 2 vols. crown 8vo, on a fine wove paper, and that it be finished in two or three months, in time for his sale.' The edition, however, was not ready till April 1793.

† Probably the 'Lament of Mary Queen of Scots.'

Edinburgh, I was very particular in my inspection, and the quantity was certainly in his possession, as I stated it. The surveys I made during his absence might as well have been marked 'Key absent,' as I never found any body but the lady, who, I know, is not mistress of keys, &c., to know anything of it, and one of the times it would have rejoiced all Hell to have seen her so drunk. I have not surveyed there since his return. I know the gentleman's ways are, like the grace of G—, past all comprehension; but I shall give the house a severe scrutiny to-morrow morning and send you in the naked facts.

I know, Sir, and regret deeply that this business glances with a malign aspect on my character as an officer: but as I am really innocent in the affair and as the gentleman is known to be an illicit dealer, and particularly as this is the *single* instance of the least shadow of carelessness or impropriety in my conduct as an officer, I shall be peculiarly unfortunate if my character shall fall a sacrifice to the dark manœuvres of a smuggler.* I am, Sir, your obliged and obedient humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

Sunday even. [ELLISLAND, *June* 1791.]

I send you some rhymes I have just finished which tickle my fancy a little.

TO MR ALEXANDER FINDLATER.

DEAR SIR—Mrs B., like a true good wife, looking on my taste as a standard, and knowing that she cannot give me anything eatable more agreeable than a new-laid egg, she begs your acceptance of a few. They are all of them *couch*, not thirty hours out.

I am, dear Sir, your obliged, humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, *Saturday morning.*

Along with this note were sent some verses: †

DEAR SIR, Our Lucky humbly begs — Mistress
Ye 'll prie her caller, new-laid eggs: — fresh
Lord grant the cock may keep her legs
Aboon the chuckies; — Above

* * * * *

Nae cursèd, clerical excise
On honest Nature's laws and ties:

* Lorimer, of whose 'dark manœuvres as a smuggler' Burns must have been ignorant when he introduced him to his friend Somerville, subsequently became bankrupt.

† The verses (which are unpublishable) are not now with the note, which is in the Monument at Edinburgh.

Free as the vernal breeze that flies
At early day,
We 'd tasted Nature's richest joys
But stint or stay. Without

But as this subject 's something kittle, delicate
Our wisest way 's to say but little,
Yet, while my Muse is at her mettle,
I am, most fervent,
Or may I die upon a whittle ! knife
Your friend and servant,
ROBERT BURNS.

TO JOHN MITCHELL, ESQ., COLLECTOR OF EXCISE, DUMFRIES.

[ELLISLAND, 16*th June* 1791.]

SIR—A very pressing occasion, no less than witnessing the wedding of an only brother,* calls me to Ayrshire, for which I shall take your permission as granted, except I be countermanded before Sunday, the day I set out. I shall remember that three days are all that I can expect. The enclosed official paper came to my hand, and I take the liberty to lay it before you. I have the honor to be your obliged, humble servant,
ROBT. BURNS.

The following letters indicate how warmly Burns could take up the cause of a friend who, in his belief, had been persecuted :

TO THE REV. WILLIAM MOODIE, EDINBURGH.†

REVD. AND DEAR SIR—This will be presented you by a particular Friend of mine, a Mr Clarke, Schoolmaster in Moffat, who has lately become the unfortunate and undeserved subject of persecution from some of his Employers. The ostensible and assigned reason on their part is some instances of severity to the boys under his care ; but I have had the best opportunities of knowing the merits of the cause and I assure you, Sir, he is falling a sacrifice to the weakness of the MANY, following in the cry of the villainy of the FEW. The business will now come before the Patrons of the School, who are the Ministers, Magistrates, and Town Council of Edinburgh ; and in that view I would interest your goodness in his behalf. 'Tis true, Sir, and I feel the full force of the observation,

* Gilbert Burns was married at Kilmarnock, on 21st June 1791, to Jean Breckenridge. Gilbert died in 1821, and his wife in 1841.

† Mr Moodie was minister of St Andrews Church, Edinburgh. In 1793 he was appointed professor of Oriental Languages in Edinburgh University. He died in 1812.

that a man in my powerless, humble station very much mistakes himself, and very much mistakes the way of the world, when he dares presume to offer influence among so highly respectable a Body as the Patronage I have mentioned; but what could I do? A man of Abilities, a man of Genius, a man of Worth, and my Friend—before I would stand quietly and silent by and see him perish thus, I would down on my knees to the rocks and the mountains, and implore them to fall on his Persecutors and crush their malice and them in deserved destruction! Believe me, Sir, he is a greatly injured man. The humblest individual, though, Alas, he cannot so redress the wrong, may yet as ably attest the fact as a Lord. Mr Moodie's goodness I well know; and that acquaintance with him I have the honor to boast of will forgive my addressing him thus in favour of a Gentleman whom, if he knew as well, he would esteem as I do.

R. B.

LETTER WRITTEN BY THE POET FOR JAMES CLARKE, SCHOOLMASTER, AND SENT BY HIM TO THE LORD PROVOST OF EDINBURGH.*

My Lord—It may be deemed presumption in a man, obscure and unknown as I am and an entire stranger to your Lordship, to trouble you in this manner; but when I inform you that the subject on which I address you is of the last importance to me and is so far connected with you, that on your determination, in a great measure, my fate must depend, I rely on your Lordship's goodness that you will think any further apology unnecessary.

I have been for nearly five years Schoolmaster in Moffat, an appointment of which your Lordship will know, you, with the rest of the Magistracy and Town Council, together with the Clergy of Edinburgh, have the patronage. The trust with which these, my highly-respectable patrons had honored me I have endeavoured to discharge with the utmost fidelity and I hope with a great degree of success; but of late, one or two powerful individuals of my employers have been pleased to attack my reputation as a Teacher, have threatened no less than to expel me from the School and are taking every method, some of them, I will say it, insidious and unfair to the last degree, to put their threats in execution. The fault of which I am accused is some instances of severity to the children under my care. Were I to tell your Lordship that I am innocent of the charge—that any shade of cruelty, particularly that very black one of cruelty to tender infancy, will be allowed by every unbiassed person who knows anything of me to be tints unknown in my disposition—you would certainly look on all this *from me* as words of course; so I shall trouble you with nothing on the merits of my cause, until I have a fair hearing before

* In the Glenriddel volume at Liverpool, this letter is thus endorsed by the poet: 'The following letter which was sent by Mr Clarke to the Provost of Edinburgh was of my writing.'

my Right Honourable Patrons. A fair hearing, my Lord, is what above all things I want, and what I greatly fear will be attempted to be denied me. It is to be insinuated that I have vacated my place, that I never was legally appointed, with I know not how many pretences more, to hinder the business from coming properly before your Lordship and the other Patrons of the School—all which I deny and will insist on holding my appointment until the dignified characters who gave it me shall find me unworthy of it.

In your Lordship's great acquaintance with human life, you must have known and seen many instances of Innocence, nay, of Merit, disguised and obscured and, sometimes, for ever buried by the dark machinations of unprincipled Malevolence and envious Craft; and until the contrary be made to appear, 'tis at least equally probable that my case is in that unfortunate and undeserved predicament.—I have the honor to be, &c.,

(Signed) JAMES CLARKE.

[MOFFAT, *June* 1791.]

LETTER WRITTEN FOR JAMES CLARKE, TO SEND TO MR WILLIAMSON, FACTOTUM AND FAVORITE TO THE EARL OF HOPETOUN.

SIR—Most sincerely do I regret that concurrence of accident, prejudice and mistake which, most unfortunately for me, has subjected me, as master of Moffat Grammar School, to the displeasure of the Earl of Hopetoun and those in whom he places confidence. Protestations of my innocence will, from me, be thought words of course. But I hope, and I think I have some well-grounded reasons for that hope, that the gentlemen in whose hands I immediately am, the Right Honourable Patrons of the School, will find the charge against me groundless and my claims just: and will not allow me to fall a sacrifice to the insidious designs of some, and the well-meant, though misinformed, zeal of others. However, as disputes and litigations must be of great hurt, both to the School and me, I most ardently wish that it would suggest itself to Mr Williamson's good sense and wish for the welfare of the country, the propriety of dropping all disputes and allowing me peaceable admission to my school and the exercise of my function. This, Sir, I am persuaded, will be serving all parties; and will lay *me* under particular and lasting obligations to your goodness. I propose opening School to-morrow; and the quiet possession of my school-house is what I have to request of you—a request which, if refused, I must be under the very disagreeable necessity of asking in the way pointed out by the laws of the country. Whatever you, Sir, may think of other parts of my conduct, you will at least grant the propriety of a man's straining every nerve in a contest, where not only Ruin but Infamy must attend his defeat.—I am, &c.,

(Signed) JAMES CLARKE.

TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., INTRODUCING JAMES CLARKE.

11th June 1791.

Let me interest you, my dear Cunningham, in behalf of the gentleman who gives you this. He is a Mr Clarke, of Moffat, principal schoolmaster there, and is at present suffering severely under the persecution of one or two powerful individuals of his employers. He is accused of harshness to some perverse dunces that were placed under his care. God help the teacher, if a man of sensibility and genius, and such is my friend Clarke, when a booby father presents him with his booby son and insists on lighting up the rays of science in a fellow's head whose skull is impervious and inaccessible by any other way than a positive fracture with a cudgel: a fellow whom, in fact, it savours of impiety to attempt making a scholar of, as he has been marked a blockhead in the book of fate, at the almighty fiat of his Creator.

The patrons of Moffat school are the ministers, magistrates and town-council of Edinburgh, and as the business comes now before them, let me beg my dearest friend to do every thing in his power to serve the interests of a man of genius, a man of worth and a man whom I particularly respect and esteem. You know some good fellows among the magistrates and council, though, God knows, 'tis generally a very unfit soil for good fellows to flourish in, but particularly you have much to say with a reverend gentleman to whom you have the honor of being very nearly related and whom this country and age have had the honor to produce. I need not name the historian of Charles V.* I tell him, through the medium of his nephew's influence, that Mr Clarke is a gentleman who will not disgrace even his patronage. I know the merits of the cause thoroughly, and say it that my friend is falling a sacrifice to prejudiced ignorance and envious, causeless malice.

God help the children of dependence! Hated and persecuted by their enemies, and too often, alas! almost unexceptionally, received by their friends with disrespect and reproach, under the thin disguise of cold civility and humiliating advice. O to be a sturdy savage, stalking in the pride of his independence amid the solitary wilds of his deserts, rather than in civilized life, helplessly to tremble for a subsistence, precarious as the caprice of a fellow-creature! Every man has his virtues and no man is without his failings; and curse on that privileged plain-dealing of friendship which, in the hour of my calamity, cannot reach forth the helping hand without at the same time pointing out those failings and apportioning them their share in procuring my present distress. My friends, for such the world calls you and such ye think yourselves to be, pass by my virtues, if you please, but do, also, spare my follies: the first will witness in my breast for them-

* Mr Cunningham was a nephew of Principal Robertson.

selves and the last will give pain enough to the ingenuous mind without you. And since deviating more or less from the paths of propriety and rectitude must be incident to human nature, do thou, Fortune, put it in my power, always from myself and of myself, to bear the consequences of those errors! I do not want to be independent that I may sin, but I want to be independent in my sinning.

To return in this rambling letter to the subject I set out with, let me recommend my friend Mr Clarke to your acquaintance and good offices: his worth entitles him to the one and his gratitude will merit the other. I long much to hear from you. Adieu! R. B.

Burns appears, from the portion of this letter which refers to himself, to have been subjected, either in public or private, to a searching hypercriticism, probably of a kind beneath his notice. The following fragment was perhaps designed as part of a private reply to a critic:

LITERARY SCOLDING.

HINTS.

Thou Eunuch of language; thou Englishman, who never was south the Tweed; thou servile echo of fashionable barbarisms; thou quack, vending the nostrums of empirical elocution; thou marriage-maker between vowels and consonants, on the Gretna-green of caprice; thou cobbler, botching the flimsy socks of bombast oratory; thou blacksmith, hammering the rivets of absurdity; thou butcher, embruing thy hands in the bowels of orthography; thou arch-heretic in pronunciation; thou pitch-pipe of affected emphasis; thou carpenter, mortising the awkward joints of jarring sentences; thou squeaking dissonance of cadence; thou pimp of gender; thou Lyon Herald to silly etymology; thou antipode of grammar; thou executioner of construction; thou brood of the speech-distracting builders of the Tower of Babel; thou lingual confusion worse confounded; thou scape-gallows from the land of syntax; thou scavenger of mood and tense; thou murderous accoucheur of infant learning; thou *ignis fatuus*, misleading the steps of benighted ignorance; thou pickle-herring in the puppet-show of nonsense; thou faithful recorder of barbarous idiom; thou persecutor of syllabication; thou baleful meteor, foretelling and facilitating the rapid approach of Nox and Erebus.*

The same spirit marks the third epistle to his patron, Graham:

* This singular composition made its appearance in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August 1832, without date or signature. The original manuscript was in possession of Andrew Henderson, surgeon, Berwick-upon-Tweed, a son of 'The Rose-bud.'

THIRD EPISTLE TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

5th October 1791.

Late crippl'd of an arm, and now a leg;
About to beg a pass for leave to beg;
Dull, listless, teas'd, dejected and deprest
(Nature is adverse to a cripple's rest);
Will generous Graham list to his Poet's wail
(It soothes poor Misery, hearkening to her tale)
And hear him curse the light he first survey'd
And doubly curse the luckless rhyming trade.

Thou, Nature! partial Nature! I arraign;
Of thy caprice maternal I complain:
The lion and the bull thy care have found,
One shakes the forests, and one spurns the ground;
Thou giv'st the ass his hide, the snail his shell;
Th' envenom'd wasp, victorious, guards his cell;
Thy minions kings defend, control, devour,
In all th' omnipotence of rule and power.
Foxes and statesmen subtile wiles ensure;
The cit and polecat stink, and are secure;
Toads with their poison, doctors with their drug,
The priest and hedgehog in their robes, are snug;
Ev'n silly woman has her warlike arts,
Her tongue and eyes—her dreaded spear and darts.

But Oh! thou bitter step-mother and hard,
To thy poor, fenceless, naked child—the Bard!
A thing unteachable in world's skill,
And half an idiot too, more helpless still:
No heels to bear him from the op'ning dun;
No claws to dig, his hated sight to shun;
No horns, but those by luckless Hymen worn,
And those, alas! not Amalthea's horn;
No nerves olfact'ry, Mammon's trusty cur,
Clad in rich Dulness' comfortable fur;

In naked feeling and in aching pride,
He bears th' unbroken blast from ev'ry side:
Vampyre booksellers drain him to the heart,
And scorpion Critics cureless venom dart:

Critics—appall'd, I venture on the name;
Those cut-throat bandits in the paths of fame;
Bloody dissectors, worse than ten Monroes:*
He hacks to teach, they mangle to expose.

His heart by causeless wanton malice wrung,
By blockheads' daring into madness stung;
His well-won bays, than life itself more dear,
By miscreants torn, who ne'er one sprig must wear;
Foil'd, bleeding, tortur'd in th' unequal strife,
The hapless Poet flounders on thro' life:
Till, fled each hope that once his bosom fir'd,
And fled each Muse that glorious once inspir'd,
Low sunk in squalid, unprotected age,
Dead, even resentment for his injur'd page,
He heeds or feels no more the ruthless Critic's rage!

So, by some hedge, the gen'rous steed deceas'd,
For half-starv'd snarling curs a dainty feast,
By toil and famine wore to skin and bone,
Lies, senseless of each tugging bitch's son.

O Dulness! portion of the truly blest!
Calm shelter'd haven of eternal rest!
Thy sons ne'er madden in the fierce extremes
Of Fortune's polar frost, or torrid beams.
If mantling high she fills the golden cup,
With sober selfish ease they sip it up:
Conscious the bounteous meed they well deserve,
They only wonder 'some folks' do not starve.
The grave sage hern thus easy picks his frog,
And thinks the Mallard a sad, worthless dog.

* Alluding to the eminent anatomist, Professor Alexander Monro, of Edinburgh University. The reference in the third line from the top is, of course, to Creech.

When disappointment snaps the clue of hope,
And thro' disastrous night they darkling grope,
With deaf endurance sluggishly they bear,
And just conclude 'that fools are fortune's care.'
So, heavy, passive to the tempest's shocks,
Strong on the sign-post stands the stupid ox.

Not so the idle Muses' mad-cap train;
Not such the workings of their moon-struck brain:
In equanimity they never dwell;
By turns in soaring heav'n or vaulted hell.

I dread thee, Fate, relentless and severe,
With all a poet's, husband's, father's fear!
Already one strong hold of hope is lost:
Glencairn, the truly noble, lies in dust
(Fled, like the sun eclips'd as noon appears,
And left us darkling in a world of tears).
O! hear my ardent, grateful, selfish pray'r!
Fintry, my other stay, long bless and spare!
Thro' a long life his hopes and wishes crown,
And bright in cloudless skies his sun go down!
May bliss domestic smooth his private path;
Give energy to life; and soothe his latest breath,
With many a filial tear circling the bed of death!

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

[ELLISLAND, *Oct.* 5, 1791.]

I ought to have written you long ago; but a mere letter of thanks must be to you an insipid business. I wish to send you something that will give you at least as much amusement as 'The Aberdeen New Prognostication' or 'Six Excellent New Songs.' Along with two other pieces, I enclose you a sheetful of groans, wrung from me in my elbow-chair, with one unlucky leg on a stool before me. I will make no apology for addressing it to you: I have no longer a *choice* of patrons: the truly noble Glencairn is no more! I intend soon to do myself the honour of writing Mrs Graham, and sending her some other lesser pieces of late date. My muse will sooner be in mischief than be idle; so I keep her at work.

I thought to have mentioned some Excise ideas that your late goodness has put into my head, but it is so like the sorning impudence of a sturdy

beggar, that I cannot do it. It was something in the way of an officiating job. With the most ardent wish that you may be rewarded by *Him* who can do it, for your generous patronage to a man who, though feeling sensible of it, is quite unable to repay it, I have the honour, &c.,

R. B.

Here may be introduced a clever and powerful (though unequal) poem which was found in the poet's handwriting at his decease, but as to the authorship of which some doubt has been expressed by Gilbert Burns and others. Portions of it have been ascribed to Fergusson, to Hamilton of Gilbertfield, even to Ramsay himself; and it is rather singular that Hamilton should have commenced his first Epistle to Ramsay thus:

O fam'd and celebrated Allan!
Renownèd Ramsay! canty callan!
There 's nowther Highlandman nor Lawlan — neither
In poetrie,
But may as soon ding down Tantallan — knock
As match wi' thee.

The resemblance between this and the sixth verse of the 'Poem on Pastoral Poetry' is obvious. The probability is, that though Burns may have obtained a hint or a line from one or other of his predecessors, the poem in its general ideas and its 'skinklin patches' is all his.

POEM ON PASTORAL POETRY.

Hail, Poesie! thou Nymph reserv'd!
In chase o' thee what crowds hae swerv'd
Frae common sense, or sunk enerv'd
'Mang heaps o' clavers; — nonsense
And och! o'er aft thy joes hae starv'd, — too oft thy sweethearts
'Mid a' thy favors!

Say, Lassie: why thy train amang,
While loud the trump's heroic clang,
And sock or buskin skelp alang — move briskly along
To death or marriage,
Scarce ane has tried the shepherd-sang
But wi' miscarriage?

In Homer's craft Jock Milton thrives;
Æschylus' pen Will Shakespeare drives;
Wee Pope, the knurlin, 'till him rives — crooked fellow —clutches
Horatian fame;
In thy sweet sang, Barbauld,* survives
Even Sappho's flame.

But thee, Theocritus, wha matches?
They 're no herd's ballats, Maro's catches; †
Squire Pope but busks his skinklin patches ‡ — smartens up —shining, showy
O' heathen tatters:
I pass by hunders, nameless wretches, — hundreds
That ape their betters.

In this braw age o' wit and lear, — learning
Will nane the Shepherd's whistle mair — more
Blaw sweetly in its native air
And rural grace;
And wi' the far-fam'd Grecian share
A rival place?

Yes! there is ane: a Scottish callan! — lad
There 's ane: come forrit, honest Allan! — forward
Thou need na jouk behint the hallan, — crouch behind the partition
A chiel sae clever; — fellow
The teeth o' time may gnaw Tantallan,§
But thou 's for ever.

Thou paints auld Nature to the nines,
In thy sweet Caledonian lines;
Nae gowden stream thro' myrtles twines, — winds
Where Philomel,
While nightly breezes sweep the vines,
Her griefs will tell!

* This curiously infelicitous—unless it be gently sarcastic—allusion to Mrs Barbauld (1743-1825), who did not publish her poems till 1773, could hardly have been made by Fergusson, who died in 1774, after a period of insanity; and could not of course have been made by Hamilton, as he died in 1754; or by Ramsay, as he died in 1758.

† Virgil's *Eclogues* are not the ballads or songs of real shepherds.

‡ Cf. *purpurei panni*, 'purple patches.'

§ A massive castle near North Berwick.

In gowany glens thy burnie strays — daisy-clothed —brooklet
Where bonnie lasses bleach their claes, — clothes
Or trots by hazelly shaws and braes — slopes
Wi' hawthorns gray,
Where blackbirds join the shepherd's lays
At close o' day.

Thy rural loves are nature's sel ; — self
Nae bombast spates o' nonsense swell ; — floods
Nae snap conceits, but that sweet spell
O' witchin love,
That charm that can the strongest quell,
The sternest move.

TO MR PETER HILL.

[DUMFRIES, 13*th July* 1791.]*

MY DEAR FRIEND—I take Glenriddel's kind offer of a corner for a postscript to you, though I have got nothing particular to tell you. It is with the greatest pleasure I learn from all hands, and particularly from your warm friend and patron, the Laird here, that you are going on, spreading and thriving like the Palm tree that shades the fragrant vale in the Holy Land of the Prophet. May the richest juices from beneath, and the dews of heaven from above, foster your root and refresh your branches, until you be as conspicuous among your fellows as the stately Goliah towering over the little pigmy Philistines around him! Amen! so be it!!! R. B.

It would seem that Mrs M'Lehose had now so far forgiven Burns as to have resumed correspondence with him. She wrote two letters before he replied.

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.†

[*July* 1791.]

I have received both your last letters, Madam, and ought, and would, have answered the first long ago. But on what subject shall I write you? How can you expect a Correspondent should write you when you declare

* The date on the MS. is supplied in a different hand. A post-mark indicates 'Ju. 14.'

† Collated with the MS. (fragment, a part having been cut off both top and bottom) now in the Watson Collection, National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh. The parts within brackets are wanting.

that you mean to preserve his letters with a view, sooner or later, to expose them on the pillory of derision and the rack of criticism? This is gagging me completely as to speaking the sentiments of my bosom; else, Madam, I could perhaps too truly

Join grief with grief and echo sighs to thine!

I have perused your most beautiful, but most pathetic, Poem—do not ask me how often or with what emotions. You know that 'I dare to *sin*, but not to *lie*.' Your Verses wring the confession from my inmost soul that —I will say it—expose it if you please—that—I have more than once in my life been the victim of a damning conjuncture of circumstances; and that to me [you must be ever

Dear as the light that visits these sad eyes.

I have just, since I had yours, composed the following stanzas. Let me know your opinion of them:]

Sweet Sensibility how charming,
Thou, my Friend, canst truly tell;
But how Distress, with horrors arming!
Thou, Alas! hast known too well!

Fairest Flower, behold the lily,
Blooming in the sunny ray:
Let the blast sweep o'er the valley,
See it prostrate on the clay.

Hear the Woodlark charm the forest,
Telling o'er his little joys:
But, Alas! a prey the surest
To each pirate of the skies.

Dearly bought the hidden treasure
Finer Feelings can bestow:
Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure
Thrill the deepest notes of woe. [R. B.]

The reply to this letter paved the way for a reconciliation:

FROM MRS M'LEHOSE.

EDINBURGH, *2nd August* [1791].

You surely mistake me, Sir—'Expose your letters to criticism!' Nothing could be further from my intention: read my letters and you

will find nothing to justify such an idea. But I suppose they are burned, so you can't have recourse to them. In an impassioned hour I once talked of publishing them, but a little cool reflection showed me its impropriety: the idea has been long abandoned and I wish you to write me with that confidence you would do to a person of whom you entertained a good opinion and who is sincerely interested in your welfare. To the 'every day children of the world' I well know one cannot speak the sentiments of the bosom.

I am pleased with your reception of the Poem and no less so with your beautiful stanzas in consequence. The last I think particularly elegant—

Dearly bought the hidden treasure, &c.

It has procured me a short visit from the Muse, who has been a stranger since the 'Golden Dream' of '88. The verses are inaccurate, but if worth while, pray correct them for me. Here they are:—

Yes, Sensibility is charming
Tho' it may wound the tender mind,
Nature's stores, the bosom warming,
Yield us pleasures most refined.

See yonder pair of warbling linnets,
How their music charms the grove;
What else with rapture fills their minutes
But Sensibility and Love?

Ev'n should the sportsmen (cruel rovers!)
Rob them of their tuneful breath,
How blest the little life-long lovers,
Undivided in their death!

A long-loved maid, nipt in the blossom,
May lie in yonder kirkyard green;
Yet Mem'ry soothes her lover's bosom,
Recalling many a raptured scene.

Or, musing by the rolling ocean,
See him sit, with visage wan,
As wave succeeding wave in motion,
Mourns the chequer'd life of Man.

Sensibility ! sweet treasure,
Still I 'll sing in praise of thee :
All that mortals know of pleasure
Flows from Sensibility.*

Let me know what you think of this poor imitation of your style. 'Tis metre, but not poetry.

Pray have you seen Greenfield's Poems? or Miss Carmichael's?† The last are very poor, I think.

I have been reading Beattie's *Minstrel* for the first time. What a delicious treat !

Interrupted—adieu ! A. M.

A very fantastic sketch of Burns at this time is presented by Dr Currie : 'In the summer of 1791, two English gentlemen, who had before met with him in Edinburgh, paid a visit to him at Ellisland. On calling at the house, they were informed that he had walked out on the banks of the river; and, dismounting from their horses, they proceeded in search of him. On a rock that projected into the stream they saw a man employed in angling, of a singular appearance. He had a cap made of a fox's skin on his head, a loose great-coat fixed round him by a belt from which depended an enormous Highland broad-sword. It was Burns. He received them with great cordiality and asked them to share his humble dinner—an invitation which they accepted. On the table they found boiled beef, with vegetables and barley-broth, after the manner of Scotland ; of which they partook heartily. After dinner the bard told them ingenuously that he had no wine to offer them —nothing better than Highland whisky, a bottle of which Mrs Burns set on the board. He produced at the same time his punch-bowl, made of Inverary marble, and, mixing the spirit with water and sugar, filled their glasses, and invited them to drink.‡

* Mr Scott Douglas, who first printed this letter (in his fifth volume), added note : 'We have, for want of space, been compelled to abridge Clarinda's little sentimental poem, but the omitted stanzas are in quality considerably inferior to those here presented.'

† *Poems*, by the late Rev. Andrew Greenfield, M.A., Rector of Moira, in Ireland. (Edinburgh : William Creech, 1790.)——*Poems*, by Miss Carmichael. (Edinburgh : Printed for the Author and sold by Peter Hill, 1790.)—See note, Vol. II., p. 61.

‡ The bowl here referred to was formed of *lapis-ollaris*, the stone of which Inverary Castle is built. It was fashioned by old Armour of Mauchline, and presented by him as a marriage-gift to his son-in-law. It found its way into the hands of Alexander Cunningham, of Edinburgh, and finally into those of Mr Hastie, long M.P. for Paisley, who is said to have refused three hundred guineas for it. Mr Hastie bequeathed it along with a number of other relics to the British Museum. The truth of the story related by Currie was denied by Mrs Burns, who stoutly maintained that her husband was not an angler.

The travellers were in haste, and, besides, the flavour of the whisky to their *southron* palates was scarcely tolerable; but the generous poet offered them his best, and his ardent hospitality they found it impossible to resist. Burns was in his happiest mood and the charms of his conversation were altogether fascinating. He ranged over a great variety of topics, illuminating whatever he touched. He related the tales of his infancy and of his youth; he recited some of the gayest and some of the tenderest of his poems: in the wildest of his strains of mirth he threw in some touches of melancholy, and spread around him the electric emotions of his powerful mind. The Highland whisky improved in its flavour; the marble bowl was again and again emptied and replenished; the guests of our poet forgot the flight of time and the dictates of prudence: at the hour of midnight they lost their way in returning to Dumfries and could scarcely distinguish it when assisted by the morning's dawn.' *

TO MR THOMAS SLOAN,†

CARE OF WM. KENNEDY, ESQ., MANCHESTER.

My dear Sloan—Suspense is worse than disappointment; for that reason I hurry to tell you that I just now learn that Mr Ballantine does not choose to interfere more in the business.‡ I am truly sorry for it, but cannot help it.

You blame me for not writing you sooner; but you will please to recollect that you omitted one little necessary piece of information—your address.

However, you know equally well my hurried life, indolent temper and strength of attachment. It must be a longer period than the longest life 'in the world's hale and undegenerate days' that will make me forget so dear a friend as Mr Sloan. I am prodigal enough at times, but I will not part with such a treasure as that.

I can easily enter into the *embarras* of your present situation. You know my favourite quotation from Young—

——— on reason build resolve—
That column of true majesty in man!

* 'Given from the information of one of the party.'—Currie.

† Sloan is understood to have been a native of Wanlockhead. His acquaintance Burns is believed to have made when travelling between Ellisland and Ayrshire during the first year of his occupancy of his farm.

‡ What 'the business' was that is here referred to has not been discovered. It was probably some financial difficulty. Mr Ballantine is doubtless Burns's old Ayr friend, John Ballantine.

and that other favourite one from Thomson's 'Alfred'—

> What proves the hero truly great,
> Is never, never to despair.

Or, shall I quote you an author of your acquaintance?

> ——For whether doing, SUFFERING or FORBEARING,
> You may do miracles by—PERSEVERING.

I have nothing new to tell you. The few friends we have are going on in the old way. I sold my crop on this day se'ennight, and sold it very well. A guinea an acre, on an average, above value. But such a scene of drunkenness was hardly ever seen in this country. After the roup was over, about thirty people engaged in a battle, every man for his own hand, and fought it out for three hours. Nor was the scene much better in the house. No fighting, indeed, but folks lying drunk on the floor and decanting, until both my dogs got so drunk by attending them, that they could not stand. You will easily guess how I enjoyed the scene; as I was no farther over than you used to see me.

Mrs B. and family have been in Ayrshire these many weeks.

Farewell! and God bless you, my dear friend!

ROBT. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, 1*st Sept.* 1791.

It must not be supposed that Burns had given any special encouragement to hard drinking at the sale of his crop. It was the custom on such occasions to supply a quantity of whisky or some other liquor, from which the persons attending the sale were expected to help themselves at discretion.

The Earl of Buchan, whose connection with the Glencairn family gave him a claim on Burns's consideration which he could never have derived from his own character, was at this time contemplating one of the fantastic fêtes which he had a mania for devising—the ostensible object being the coronation of a bust of James Thomson, the poet, on Ednam Hill, while the true end was the glorification of the Earl of Buchan. He wrote to Burns, requesting his presence on the occasion and suggesting that he should 'go across the country and meet the Tweed at the nearest point to his farm; and wandering along the pastoral banks of Thomson's pure parent stream, catch inspiration on the devious walk, till he finds Lord Buchan sitting on the ruins of Dryburgh. There,' he adds, 'the commendator [for so he considered himself, as being the successor of the ancient abbots] will give

him [Burns] a hearty welcome, and try to light his lamp at the pure flame of native genius, upon the altar of Caledonian virtue.' Burns returned a courteous answer—two and a half months later:

TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

My Lord—Language sinks under the ardour of my feelings when I would thank your Lordship for the honour, the very great honour, you have done me, in inviting me to the coronation of the bust of Thomson. In my first enthusiasm, on reading the card you did me the honour to write to me, I overlooked every obstacle and determined to go; but I fear it will not be in my power. A week or two['s absence], in the very middle of my harvest, is what I much doubt I dare not venture on. I once already made a pilgrimage *up* the whole course of the Tweed, and fondly would I take the same delightful journey *down* the windings of that charming stream.

Your Lordship hints at an ode for the occasion: but who would write after Collins? I read over his verses to the memory of Thomson, and despaired. I attempted three or four stanzas in the way of address to the shade of the bard on crowning his bust. I trouble your Lordship with the inclosed copy of them, which I am afraid will be but too convincing a proof how unequal I am to the task you would obligingly assign me. However, it affords me an opportunity of approaching your Lordship and declaring how sincerely I have the honour to be, My Lord, Your Lordship's highly-obliged And most devoted humble servant,

Robert Burns.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 29*th August* 1791.

ADDRESS TO THE SHADE OF THOMSON,

ON CROWNING HIS BUST AT EDNAM, ROXBURGH-SHIRE, WITH BAYS.

While virgin Spring by Eden's flood
  Unfolds her tender mantle green,
Or pranks the sod in frolic mood,
  Or tunes Eolian strains between;

While Summer, with a matron grace,
  Retreats to Dryburgh's cooling shade,
Yet oft, delighted, stops to trace
  The progress of the spikey blade;

While Autumn, benefactor kind,
By Tweed erects his agèd head,
And sees, with self-approving mind,
Each creature on his bounty fed;

While maniac Winter rages o'er
The hills whence classic Yarrow flows,
Rousing the turbid torrent's roar,
Or sweeping, wild, a waste of snows:

So long, sweet Poet of the Year!
Shall bloom that wreath thou well has won;
While Scotia, with exulting tear,
Proclaims that THOMSON was her son.*

The account of the proceedings at the coronation on 22nd September may be given in Buchan's words: 'He (Lord Buchan) circulated letters to the gentlemen who had attended the former anniversary [in 1790] and to many other persons of distinction and learning in Scotland: to Messrs Hayley, Mason, Beattie and Burns. But very few gentlemen paid any attention to the notification; a cast from the bust of the poet in Westminster Abbey, which had been generously transmitted by Mr Coutts, banker at London, to be crowned with a wreath of bays, was broken in a midnight frolic during the race week on the 16th of September; and the Earl of Buchan contented himself with im-

* Burns, in looking into Collins for his verses to the memory of Thomson, had probably glanced at the same poet's 'Ode to Evening,' the three concluding verses of which are manifestly imitated in this Address:

While Spring shall pour his showers, as oft he wont,
And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve;
While Summer loves to sport
Beneath thy lingering light:

While sallow Autumn fills thy cup with leaves,
Or Winter, yelling through the troublous air,
Affrights thy shrinking train,
And rudely rends thy robes:

So long, regardful of thy quiet rule,
Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, smiling Peace,
Thy gentlest influence own,
And love thy favourite name!

posing a wreath of laurel, dressed by Mr Robert Craig, architect, the poet's sister's son, on a copy of *The Seasons*, printed 1730, in 4to, being the first complete edition, presented by the poet to his father, addressing the shade of the poet, in the beautiful apostrophe composed for a blank leaf of *The Seasons*, by the Rev. Mr William Thomson, of Queen's College, Oxford.' *

Burns had become acquainted, probably at Friars' Carse, with Deborah Davies, a beautiful *petite* young Englishwoman, a relative of the Riddels, and connected by the marriage of a sister † with the family of Kenmure in Kirkcudbrightshire. The poet at once numbered himself among her adorers.

TO MISS DAVIES.

[*August* 1791.]

MADAM—I understand my very worthy neighbour, Mr Riddel, has informed you that I have made you the subject of some verses. There is something [so provoking] in the idea of being the burden of a ballad, that I do not think Job or Moses, though such patterns of patience and meekness, could have resisted the curiosity to know what that ballad was; so my worthy friend has done me a mischief, what I daresay he never intended, and reduced me to the unfortunate alternative of leaving your curiosity ungratified or else disgusting you with foolish verses, the unfinished production of a random moment and never meant to have met your ear. I have heard or read somewhere of a gentleman who had some genius, much eccentricity and very considerable dexterity with his pencil. In the accidental groups of life, into which one is thrown, wherever this gentleman met with a character in a more than ordinary degree congenial to his heart, he used to steal a sketch of the face, merely, he said, as a *nota bene*, to point out the agreeable recollection to his memory. What this gentleman's pencil was to him, my Muse is to me; and the verses I do myself the honour to send you are a *memento* exactly of the same kind that he indulged in.

It may be more owing to the fastidiousness of my caprice than the delicacy of my taste, but I am so often tired, disgusted and hurt with the insipidity, affectation and pride of mankind, that when I meet with a person 'after my own heart' I positively feel what an orthodox Protestant would call a species of idolatry, which acts on my fancy like inspiration; and I can no more desist rhyming on the impulse than the Æolian harp can refuse its tones to the streaming air. A distich or two

* From Buchan's *Essay on the Genius, Character and Writings of James Thomson, the poet* (London, 1792).

† The son of this sister was ninth Viscount Kenmure, who died September 1, 1847, at the age of fifty-six, and with whom the title became extinct.

would be the consequence, though the object which hit my fancy were grey-bearded age; but where my theme is youth and beauty, a young lady whose personal charms, wit and sentiment are equally striking and unaffected—by Heavens! though I had lived threescore years a married man, and threescore years before I was a married man, my imagination would hallow the very idea: and I am truly sorry that the enclosed stanzas have done such poor justice to such a subject. R. B.

LOVELY DAVIES.

TUNE—*Miss Muir.*

O how shall I, unskilfu', try
The Poet's occupation?
The tunefu' powers, in happy hours,
That whispers inspiration,
Even they maun dare an effort mair
Than aught they ever gave us,
Or they rehearse, in equal verse, Eve
The charms o' lovely Davies.

Each eye, it cheers when she appears,
Like Phebus in the morning,
When past the show'r, and every flower
The garden is adorning:
As the wretch looks o'er Siberia's shore,
When winter-bound the wave is;
Sae droops our heart when we maun part
Frae charming, lovely Davies.

Her smile 's a gift frae 'boon the lift, sky
That maks us mair than princes;
A scepter'd hand, a king's command,
Is in her darting glances:
The man in arms 'gainst female charms,
Even he her willing slave is;
He hugs his chain, and owns the reign
Of conquering, lovely Davies.

My Muse to dream of such a theme,
Her feeble powers surrender;

The eagle's gaze alone surveys
The sun's meridian splendor:
I wad in vain essay the strain,
The deed too daring brave is;
I'll drop the lyre, and mute, admire
The charms o' lovely Davies.

'One day, while Burns was at Moffat'—thus writes Allan Cunningham—'the charming, lovely Davies rode past, accompanied by a lady tall and portly: on a friend asking the Poet why God made one lady so large and Miss Davies so little, he replied in the words of the epigram:'

EPIGRAM ON MISS DAVIES.

Ask why God made the gem so small,
And why so huge the granite?—
Because God meant mankind should set
That higher value on it.

'No one, adds Cunningham, 'has apologized so handsomely for "scrimpit stature."'

Burns afterwards celebrated Miss Davies still more effectively in a much finer and more tender song, which has had the good fortune to be associated with one of the most beautiful of Scottish airs:

THE BONIE WEE THING.

TUNE—*Bonnie Wee Thing.*

Wishfully I look and languish
In that bonie face o' thine;
And my heart it stounds wi' anguish — throbs
Lest my wee thing be na mine.

Chorus—Bonie wee thing, cannie wee thing, — dainty
Lovely wee thing, was thou mine;
I wad wear thee in my bosom,
Lest my jewel I should tine. — lose

Wit and Grace and Love and Beauty,
In ae constellation shine ; one
To adore thee is my duty,
Goddess o' this soul o' mine !

TO MISS DAVIES.

[*August* 1791.]

It is impossible, Madam, that the generous warmth and angelic purity of your youthful mind can have any idea of that moral disease under which I unhappily must rank as the chief of sinners : I mean a torpitude of the moral powers, that may be called a lethargy of conscience. In vain remorse rears her horrent crest and rouses all her snakes : beneath the deadly-fixed eye and leaden hand of Indolence, their wildest ire is charmed into the torpor of the bat, slumbering out the rigours of winter in the chink of a ruined wall. Nothing less, madam, could have made me so long neglect your obliging commands. Indeed, I had one apology —the bagatelle was not worth presenting. Besides, so strongly am I interested in Miss Davies's fate and welfare in the serious business of life, amid its chances and changes, that to make her the subject of a silly ballad is downright mockery of these ardent feelings : 'tis like an impertinent jest to a dying friend.

Gracious Heaven ! why this disparity between our wishes and our powers ? Why is the most generous wish to make others blest, impotent and ineffectual as the idle breeze that crosses the pathless desert ? In my walks of life I have met with a few people to whom how gladly would I have said—'Go ! be happy ! I know that your hearts have been wounded by the scorn of the proud, whom accident has placed above you —or, worse still, in whose hands are, perhaps, placed many of the comforts of your life. But there ! ascend that rock, Independence, and look justly down on their littleness of soul. Make the worthless tremble under your indignation and the foolish sink before your contempt ; and largely impart that happiness to others, which, I am certain, will give yourselves so much pleasure to bestow !'

Why, dear madam, must I wake from this delightful reverie and find it all a dream ? Why, amid my generous enthusiasm, must I find myself poor and powerless, incapable of wiping one tear from the eye of pity or of adding one comfort to the friend I love ?—Out upon the world ! say I, that its affairs are administered so ill ! They talk of reform—good Heaven ! what a reform would I make among the sons, and even the daughters, of men ! Down, immediately, should go fools from the high places where misbegotten chance has perked them up, and through life should they skulk, ever haunted by their native insignificance, as the body marches accompanied by its shadow. As for a much more formidable class, the *knaves*, I am at a loss what to do with them : Had I a world, there should not be a knave in it. . . . But the hand

that could give, I would liberally fill; and I would pour delight on the heart that could kindly forgive and generously love.

Still, the inequalities of life are, among men, comparatively tolerable: but there is a delicacy, a tenderness, accompanying every view in which we can place lovely Woman, that are grated and shocked at the rude, capricious distinctions of fortune. Woman is the blood-royal of life: let there be slight degrees of precedency among them—but let them be ALL sacred. Whether this last sentiment be right or wrong, I am not accountable: it is an original component feature of my mind. . . .

R. B.

Allan Cunningham has related the pathetic subsequent history of Miss Davies, on the authority of her nephew. A Captain Delany 'made himself acceptable to her by sympathising in her pursuits and writing verses on her, calling her his Stella, an ominous name which might have brought the memory of Swift's unhappy mistress to her mind. An offer of marriage was made and accepted, but Delany's circumstances were urged as an obstacle; delays ensued; a coldness on the lover's part followed; his regiment was called abroad, he went with it; she heard from him once and no more; and was left to mourn the change of affection—to droop and die. He perished in battle or by a foreign climate, soon after the death of the young lady, of whose love he was so unworthy.

'The following verses on this unfortunate attachment form part of a poem found among her papers at her death: she takes Delany's portrait from her bosom, presses it to her lips, and says—

"Next to thyself, 'tis all on earth
Thy Stella dear doth hold;
The glass is clouded with my breath,
And as my bosom cold:
That bosom which so oft has glowed
With love and friendship's name,
Where you the seed of love first sowed
That kindled into flame.

"You there neglected let it burn,
It seized the vital part,
And left my bosom as an urn
To hold a broken heart:
I once had thought I should have been
A tender, happy wife,
And passed my future days serene
With thee, my James, through life."'

At this time Burns made a collection of his verses * for his friend Mrs Stewart of Stair, and sent them with the following note:

Many verses, on which an author would by no means rest his reputation in print, may yet amuse an idle moment in manuscript; and many Poems, from the locality of the subject, may be uninteresting or unintelligible to those who are strangers to that locality. Most of, if not all, the following Poems are in one or other of those predicaments, and the author begs whoever into whose hands they may fall, that they will do him the justice not to publish what he himself thought proper to suppress.

R. B.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ., AYR.†

[ELLISLAND, *September* 1791.]

SIR—Inclosed you will receive a draught on the Paisley-bank for the thirty two pounds I discounted in a bill at your Bank. I did not like to send money so far, else I would have sent you the cash, but I suppose (for I am miserably ignorant in the business) that the Draught will do quite as well. Indeed, I would have sent a servant all the way with the money, but the Banker in Dumfries who manages for the Paisley people assured me that you banking-folks hold Draughts on one another as equal to cash.

I am conscious that I must make so despicable a figure as a Man of Business, that I am determined to appear before you in another character, and one in which I shall stand more erect in your presence: I beg leave to present you my last, and not my worst, Ballad. I have explained the occasion in an appendix to the Piece. You will readily guess that the 'Bard' mentioned in the Poem was a certain Poet whom a few years ago you handed up to the 'Court of the Gentiles' in the temple of Fame, where God grant that he may make his footing good!

Lord Buchan lately sent me an invitation to make one at the Coronation of a bust of Thomson which is placed, or about to be placed, on Ednam-hill, the place where the Poet was born. I excused myself to his Lordship as they have fixed the middle of harvest for the business, but I sent him the following stanzas, as an Address to the shade of the Bard on crowning his Bust with the Poetic Wreath. I daresay you know the scenery alluded to in the neighbouring country, else I fear the verses will lose any little merit they may have.

[Here the Poet copied the 'Address to the Shade of Thomson.']

* Now known as the Afton MSS. See Appendix No. IV.

† Here first published—from the MS. in the National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.

I have not done any thing in the Excise matter you were so good as interest yourself in, but I will in a few days.

Expressions of gratitude are now so prostituted by the Unmeaning and the Insincere that a man, *in earnest*, does not know how to meddle with them, without contamination; but when I forget what I owe Mr Ballantine's goodness, may every Good Man forget me and every Scoundrel tuck me under the arm and call me Brother!!! I have the honor to be, Sir, your obliged humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

TO COLONEL FULLARTON, OF FULLARTON.*

SIR—I have just this minute got the frank, and next minute must send it to post, else I purposed to have sent you two or three other bagatelles that might have amused a vacant hour about as well as *Six Excellent New Songs* or *The Aberdeen Prognostications for the year to come.*† I shall probably trouble you soon with another packet, about the gloomy month of November, when the people of England hang and drown themselves—anything generally is better than one's own thoughts.

Fond as I may be of my own productions, it is not for their sake that I am so anxious to send you them. I am ambitious, covetously ambitious, of being known to a gentleman whom I am proud to call my countryman;‡ a gentleman who was a Foreign Ambassador as soon as he was a man and a leader of armies as soon as he was a soldier; and with an *éclat* unknown to the usual minions of a Court—men who, with all the adventitious advantages of Princely connections and Princely fortunes, must yet, like the caterpillar, labour a whole lifetime before they reach the wished-for height, there to roost a stupid chrysalis and doze out the remaining glimmering existence of old age.

If the gentleman that accompanied you when you did me the honour of calling on me, is with you, I beg to be respectfully remembered to him. I have the honour to be, Sir, Your highly-obliged and most devoted humble Servant, ROBT. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, *October* 3, 1791.

The next letter shows that Burns was now moving to secure his promotion, though still simply as an officer.

* Colonel Fullarton, it will be recollected, is honourably mentioned in *The Vision*. The letter first appeared in the *Paisley Magazine*, 1828.

† *Six Excellent New Songs* was a chap-book of a few leaves, sold at a halfpenny. The *Aberdeen Prognostications*, &c., was an almanac published at Aberdeen, at the price of a penny.

‡ Meaning a native of the same county.

TO MR CORBET, SUPERVISOR-GENERAL OF EXCISE.

[*October* 1791.]

SIR—I have in my time taken up the pen on several ticklish subjects, but none that ever cost me half so much as the language of supplication. To lay open one's wants and woes to the mercy of another's benevolence is a business so prostituted by the worthless and unfeeling, that a man of Principle and Delicacy shrinks from it as from Contamination.

Mr F[indlater]* tells me that you wish to know from myself what are my views in desiring to change my Excise Division. With the wish, natural to man, of bettering his present situation, I have turned my thoughts towards the practicability of getting into a Port Division. As I know that the General Supervisors are omnipotent in these matters, my honored friend, Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop, offered me to interest you in my behalf. She told me that she was well acquainted with Mrs Corbet's goodness and that, on the score of former intimacy, she thought she could promise some influence with her; and added, with her usual sagacity and knowledge of human nature, that the surest road to the good offices of a man was through the mediation of the woman he loved. On this footing, Sir, I venture my application, else not even the known generosity of your character would have emboldened me to address you thus. I have the honor, &c., [R. B.]

Amongst the gentry of Dumfriesshire whose acquaintance Burns made was Charles Sharpe of Hoddam,† an excellent violinist, and a composer of both music and verse. His son, the celebrated 'Scottish Walpole,' Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, printed an air to the song of 'The Ewe-milking's Bonnie,' which the Laird of Hoddam was believed to have produced upon the old-fashioned shepherd's pipe, called in Scotland 'Stock and Horn,' when only eight years of age. Burns, having heard an air of Sharpe's composition, conceived the whimsical idea of addressing him under a fictitious signature, in the character of a vagrant fiddler. What the 'three stanzas' spoken of in the letter were is not known.

* Alexander Findlater, elder son of the Rev. Thomas Findlater, minister of Linton, in the county of Peebles, was born in 1758; admitted to the Excise in 1774; placed on the 'List of persons recommended for Examiner and Supervisor' on 10th October 1786; appointed Examiner, 1st June 1790; settled as supervisor in Dumfries, 14th April 1791; appointed Collector in Glasgow; died 4th December 1839.

† Charles Sharpe (Charles Kirkpatrick) was a grandson of Sir Thomas Kirkpatrick, second Baronet, of Closeburn. In 1769, a kinsman, Matthew Sharpe, bequeathed him the estate of Hoddam, Dumfriesshire; he thereupon assumed the name Sharpe. He was born 1750; married (1779) Eleanora, youngest daughter of John Renton of Lamerton; died 1813. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe was his third son.

TO CHARLES SHARPE, ESQ., OF HODDAM, INCLOSING A BALLAD.

It is true, Sir, you are a gentleman of rank and fortune and I am a poor devil; you are a feather in the cap of society and I am a very hobnail in his shoes; yet I have the honor to belong to the same family with you, and on that score I now address you. You will perhaps suspect that I am going to claim affinity with the ancient and honorable house of Kirkpatrick.* No, no, Sir: I cannot indeed be properly said to belong to any house, or even any province or kingdom, as my mother, who for many years was spouse to a marching regiment, gave me into this bad world, aboard the packet-boat somewhere between Donaghadee and Portpatrick. By our common family, I mean, Sir, the family of the Muses. I am a fiddler and a poet; and you, I am told, play an exquisite violin and have a standard taste in the Belles Lettres. The other day a brother-catgut gave me a charming Scots air of your composition. If I was pleased with the tune, I was in raptures with the title you have given it; and taking up the idea, I have spun it into the three stanzas inclosed. Will you allow me, Sir, to present you them, as the dearest offering that a misbegotten son of poverty and rhyme has to give? I have a longing to take you by the hand and unburden my heart by saying: 'Sir, I honor you as a man who supports the dignity of human nature amid an age when frivolity and avarice have, between them, debased us below the brutes that perish!' But, alas, Sir! to me you are unapproachable. It is true the Muses baptized me in Castalian streams; but the thoughtless gipsies forgot to give me a Name. As the sex have served many a good fellow, the Nine have given me a great deal of pleasure; but, bewitching jades! they have beggared me. Would they but spare me a little of their cast-linen! Were it only to put it in my power to say that I have a shirt on my back! But the idle wenches, like Solomon's lilies, 'they toil not, neither do they spin;' so I must e'en continue to tie my remnant of a cravat, like the hangman's rope, round my naked throat, and coax my galligaskins to keep together their many-coloured fragments. As to the affairs of shoes, I have given that up. My pilgrimages in my ballad-trade, from town to town, and on your stony-hearted turnpikes, too, are what not even the hide of Job's Behemoth could bear. The coat on my back is no more: I shall not speak evil of the dead. It would be equally unhandsome and ungrateful to find fault with my old surtout, which so kindly supplies and conceals the want of that coat. My hat indeed is a great favorite; and though I got it literally for an old song, I would not exchange it for the best beaver in Britain. I was, during several years, a kind of fac-totum servant to a country clergyman, where I pickt up a good many scraps of learning, particularly in some branches of the mathematics. Whenever I feel inclined to rest myself on my way, I take my seat under a hedge, laying my poetic wallet on the one side and my fiddle-case on the

* See note, previous page.

other, and placing my hat between my legs, I can by means of its brim, or rather brims, go through the whole doctrine of the Conic Sections.

However, Sir, don't let me mislead you, as if I would interest your pity. Fortune has so much forsaken me, that she has taught me to live without her; and amid all my rags and poverty, I am as independent, and much more happy, than a monarch of the world. According to the hackneyed metaphor, I value the several actors in the great drama of life, simply as they act their parts. I can look on a worthless fellow of a duke with unqualified contempt; and can regard an honest scavenger with sincere respect. As you, Sir, go through your rôle with such distinguished merit, permit me to make one in the chorus of universal applause, and assure you that with the highest respect, I have the honor to be, &c.,

JOHNNY FAA.

This curious letter led to a temporary intimacy between Sharpe and Burns, of which almost all evidence has vanished. The only other memorial extant of the friendship is a masonic apron described as of 'chamois leather, very fine, with figures of gold, some of them relieved with green, others with a dark-red colour,' while 'on the under side of the semicircular part which is turned down at the top is written in a bold, fair hand:

"CHARLES SHARPE, of Hotham, TO RABBIE BURNS.

DUMFRIES, *Dec.* 12, 1791."*

Most probably Burns had met Sharpe at the symposia of the Freemasons in Dumfries.

The local library scheme which Burns had helped to set on foot, soon after coming to Ellisland, had now run its three years' course with success. Mr Kirkpatrick, the minister of Dunscore, had sent an account of his parish to Sir John Sinclair, for publication in the large statistical work which he had commenced: from this he omitted all reference to the Friars' Carse Library, probably, as Allan Cunningham suggests, from a dislike to the kind of literature patronised by its members. Captain Riddel had either seen Mr Kirkpatrick's 'account,' or heard of the omission, and resolved to make up, as far as possible, for this deficiency, and prevailed on Burns to write a history of the library, which he forwarded to Sir John. We learn that Burns had been the life and soul of this little scheme and that his services to it were properly appreciated. It will be observed that his large

* Letter of John Ramsay (author of *Woodnotes of a Wanderer*), in *Ayr Advertiser*, January 9, 1851.

and liberal mind had in a remarkable degree anticipated in 1788 that movement for popular instruction which did not properly begin till some thirty years afterwards. He saw that to give the working classes a turn for reading and reflection is at once 'giving them a source of innocent and laudable amusement, and raising them to a more dignified degree in the scale of rationality.' Nor is it too much to say that in his conception of the peasant who can read and enjoy books as 'a much superior being to his neighbour who perhaps stalks beside his team, very little removed, except in shape, from the brutes he drives,' we have the first suggestion of the four noble lines into which, in 'Here 's a health to them that 's awa',' he condensed the whole teaching of Milton's *Areopagitica:*

> Here 's freedom to him that wad read!
> Here 's freedom to him that wad write,
> There 's nane ever feared that the truth should be heard
> But they wham the truth wad indite.

Both letters appeared in the third volume of the *Statistical Account of Scotland.*

TO SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, OF ULBSTER, BART.*

SIR JOHN—I inclose you a letter, wrote by Mr Burns, as an addition to the account of Dunscore parish. It contains an account of a small library which he was so good (at my desire) as to set on foot in the barony of Monkland, or Friars' Carse, in this parish. As its utility has been felt, particularly among the younger class of people, I think that if a similar plan were established in the different parishes in Scotland, it would tend greatly to the speedy improvement of the tenantry, trades-people and work-people. Mr Burns was so good as take the whole charge of this small concern. He was treasurer, librarian and censor to this little society, who will long have a grateful sense of his public spirit and exertions for their improvement and information. I have the honour to be, Sir John, Yours most sincerely, ROB. RIDDEL.

TO SIR JOHN SINCLAIR.

SIR—The following circumstance has, I believe, been omitted in the Statistical Account, transmitted to you, of the parish of Dunscore, in Nithsdale. I beg leave to send it you, because it is new and may be

* Sir John Sinclair, born at Thurso Castle in 1754; M.P. for Caithness in 1780, for Lostwithiel in 1784, and for Petersfield 1796-1811; published *A History of the Revenue of the British Empire* (1784); founded Board of Agriculture for Scotland in 1793; published (1791-1799) the *Statistical Account of Scotland* in 21 volumes; died at Edinburgh in 1835.

useful. How far it is deserving of a place in your patriotic publication, you are the best judge.

To store the minds of the lower classes with useful knowledge is certainly of very great importance, both to them as individuals and to society at large. Giving them a turn for reading and reflection is giving them a source of innocent and laudable amusement; and, besides, raises them to a more dignified degree in the scale of rationality. Impressed with this idea, a gentleman in this parish, Robert Riddel, Esq., of Glenriddel, set on foot a species of circulating library, on a plan so simple as to be practicable in any corner of the country; and so useful as to deserve the notice of every country gentleman who thinks the improvement of that part of his own species whom chance has thrown into the humble walks of the peasant and the artisan a matter worthy of his attention.

Mr Riddel got a number of his own tenants and farming neighbours to form themselves into a society, for the purpose of having a library among themselves. They entered into a legal engagement to abide by it for three years; with a saving clause or two, in case of removal to a distance or of death. Each member, at his entry, paid five shillings; and at each of their meetings, which were held every fourth Saturday, sixpence more. With their entry-money and the credit which they took on the faith of their future funds, they laid in a tolerable stock of books at the commencement. What authors they were to purchase was always to be decided by the majority. At every meeting, all the books, under certain fines and forfeitures, by way of penalty, were to be produced; and the members had their choice of the volumes in rotation. He whose name stood, for that night, first on the list had his choice of what volume he pleased in the whole collection; the second had his choice after the first; the third after the second; and so on to the last. At next meeting, he who had been first on the list at the preceding meeting was last at this; he who had been second was first; and so on, through the whole three years. At the expiration of the engagement, the books were sold by auction, but only among the members themselves; and each man had his share of the common stock, in money or in books, as he chose to be a purchaser or not.

At the breaking up of this little society, which was formed under Mr Riddel's patronage, what with benefactions of books from him and what with their own purchases, they had collected together upwards of one hundred and fifty volumes. It will easily be guessed that a good deal of trash would be bought. Among the books, however, of this little library were—Blair's *Sermons*, Robertson's *History of Scotland*, Hume's *History of the Stewarts*, *The Spectator*, *Idler*, *Adventurer*, *Mirror*, *Lounger*, *Observer*, *Man of Feeling*, *Man of the World*, *Chrysal*,* *Don Quixote*,

* *Chrysal; or the Adventures of a Guinea, by an Adept*, has been described as 'the best scandalous chronicle of the day'—claiming to reveal state secrets and expose the profligacy of public personages. It was the principal work of the novelist Charles Johnstone (1719(?)–1800), and was published in 4 volumes in 1760–65 (often reprinted).

Joseph Andrews, &c. A peasant who can read and enjoy such books is certainly a much superior being to his neighbour who, perhaps, stalks beside his team, very little removed, except in shape, from the brutes he drives.

Wishing your patriotic exertions their so much merited success—I am, Sir, your humble servant,

A PEASANT
[*i.e.*, ROBERT BURNS].

A FRAGMENT:

ON GLENRIDDEL'S FOX BREAKING HIS CHAIN.*

Thou, Liberty, thou art my theme:
Not such as idle Poets dream
Who trick thee up a Heathen goddess
That a fantastic cap and rod has:
Such stale conceits are poor and silly;
I paint thee out, a Highland filly,
A sturdy, stubborn, handsome dapple,
As sleek 's a mouse, as round 's an apple,
That when thou pleasest can do wonders;
But when thy luckless rider blunders,
Or if thy fancy should demur there,
Wilt break thy neck ere thou go further.

These things premis'd, I sing a fox
Was caught among his native rocks
And to a dirty kennel chained—
How he his liberty regained.

Glenriddel, a Whig without a stain,
A Whig in principle and grain,
Could'st thou enslave a free-born creature,
A native denizen of nature?
How could'st thou, with a heart so good
(A better ne'er was sluiced with blood),

* The only MS. of this known to exist is the Glenriddel MS. at Liverpool.

Nail a poor devil to a tree,
That ne'er did harm to thine or thee?

The staunchest Whig Glenriddel was,
Quite frantic in his county's cause;
And oft was Reynard's prison passing,
And with his brother-Whigs canvassing
The Rights of Men, the Powers of Women,
With all the dignity of Freemen.

Sir Reynard daily heard debates
Of Princes', kings' and Nations' fates;
With many rueful, bloody stories
Of tyrants, Jacobites and Tories:
From liberty how angels fell
That now are galley-slaves in hell;
How Nimrod first the trade began
Of binding Slavery's chains on man;
How fell Semiramis, G—d d—mn her!*
Did first, with sacrilegious hammer,
(All ills till then were trivial matters!)
For Man dethroned forge hen-peck fetters;
How Xerxes, that abandoned Tory,
Thought cutting throats was reaping glory,
Until the stubborn Whigs of Sparta
Taught him great Nature's Magna Charta;
How mighty Rome her fiat hurl'd
Resistless o'er a bowing world,
And kinder than they did desire,
Polished mankind with sword and fire;
With much, too tedious to relate,
Of Ancient and of Modern date,
But ending, still, how Billy Pitt,
(Unlucky boy!) with wicked wit,
Has gagg'd old Britain, drained her coffer,
As butchers bind and bleed a heifer.

* Semiramis, queen of Ninus, and with him a fabled founder of the Assyrian empire, was said to have obtained leave from her husband to rule for five days; and having obtained supreme power, cast the unlucky Ninus into prison, or, according to another story, put him to death. At anyrate, her subsequent fame threw that of Ninus into the shade.

Thus wily Reynard, by degrees,
In kennel listening at his ease,
Suck'd in a mighty stock of knowledge,
As much as some folks at a college:
Knew Britain's rights and constitution,
Her aggrandisement, diminution,
How fortune wrought us good from evil;
Let no man, then, despise the devil,
As who should say, 'I ne'er can need him,'
Since we to scoundrels owe our freedom.

* * * * * *

TO JOHN MAXWELL, ESQ., OF TERRAUGHTY, ON HIS BIRTHDAY.

Health to the Maxwells' vet'ran Chief!
Health, ay unsour'd by care or grief:
Inspir'd, I turn'd Fate's sibyl leaf,
This natal morn,
I see thy life is stuff o' prief, proof
Scarce quite half-worn:

This day thou metes threescore eleven,
And I can tell that bounteous Heaven
(The second sight, ye ken, is given know
To ilka Poet) every
On thee a tack o' seven times seven term, lease
Will yet bestow it.

If envious buckies view wi' sorrow gallants
Thy lengthen'd days on this blest morrow,
May Desolation's lang-teeth'd harrow,
Nine miles an hour,
Rake them, like Sodom and Gomorrah,
In brunstane stoure. brimstone dust

But for thy friends, and they are mony,
Baith honest men and lasses bonie,
May couthie Fortune, kind and cannie, comfortable—frugal
In social glee,
Wi' mornings blythe and e'enings funny
Bless them and thee!

Fareweel, auld birkie! Lord be near ye, good fellow
And then the Deil, he daurna steer ye: dare not touch
Your friends ay love, your faes ay fear ye,
For me, shame fa' me, befall
If neist my heart I dinna wear ye next
While Burns they ca' me.

John Maxwell of Terraughty and Munches who is addressed in this poem was a leading public man in the county of Dumfries. He was descended from the ultra-loyal Lord Herries, who on bended knees entreated Queen Mary to prosecute Bothwell as the murderer of her husband, and who subsequently fought for her at Langside. A relative in the sixth degree of one who was 'Warden of the West Marches' in 1545, he lived to the close of the wars of the French Revolution, dying on the 25th January 1814, at the age of ninety-four. Mr Maxwell was an active man, both in the management of his own estate and in public business, and is admitted to have contributed greatly to the prosperity of his native district. He wrote a very curious paper in 1811, giving a view of the advance of the country in agricultural economy during his lifetime.

We have seen that so early as January 1790, after little more than a year and a half's experience of his farm, the poet had become alarmed at its unprofitableness. His statement to Lady Elizabeth Cunningham in the spring of 1791 is that, but for the support he had from his Excise income, he must have sunk under the bad bargain of his farm. At all events, Burns now only waited for a somewhat better appointment in the Excise to say good-bye to his unprofitable acres. He had been led to expect a supervisorship; but that was to remain a hope deferred. The arrangement actually made was that Burns should perform

duty in Dumfries as an ordinary exciseman, and enjoy a salary of £70 per annum. This was an advance of £20 upon his Ellisland income, and as he did not now require to keep a horse, the increase was actually more than £20. The income was indeed a small one, but he was led to expect an advance in the service which, though increasing his work, would put him comparatively at ease in his circumstances.

As a first step, he had to get Mr Miller to take Ellisland off his hands. By this time the two men had become estranged. Burns, it has been asserted 'found that Mr Miller's relation to him was that of the patron, who expected deference, and passively, if not actively, resented Burns's independence.' Yet there is no evidence of Mr Miller having ever acted otherwise than generously and leniently towards Burns, or of Burns having ever shown ingratitude or open disrespect towards Mr Miller. When the poet wished to part with the farm, the landlord happened to be more than willing to cancel the lease. A neighbouring proprietor, John Morin of Laggan, offered to purchase for £1900 what Burns could not profitably rent at £70. Mr Miller was ready enough to part on such terms with a piece of his property which was inconveniently cut off from the rest by the river.* Accordingly, on the 19th November, Morin became proprietor of 'the forty-shilling or three-merk land of old

* 'Long after Burns had gone to his final resting-place in St Michael's churchyard, his brother-in-law, Adam Armour, of Mauchline, told a curious story about the fate of the window panes at Ellisland on which some of the poet's verses had been engraved. Adam was a mason, and was frequently engaged at Dalswinton when Mr Miller had building operations on hand. On such occasions he found quarters with his sister at Ellisland. He happened to be there at the time of the removal to Dumfries, and assisted at the *flitting*. The new proprietor of Ellisland, Mr John Morin of Laggan, in Dunscore, had disagreed with Burns about the value of the manure left on the farm and the state of the fences and offices. He insisted that the outgoing tenant should put everything in proper order before quitting the place. Burns felt that he was being hardly treated after all he had done to reclaim what was practically a piece of waste ground. On the very day of the removal several things occurred to still further embitter the feelings and rouse the fiery temper of the poet. So that evening Adam Armour was sent from Dumfries back to Ellisland with instructions to smash every pane of glass on which any writing of Burns's remained. This commission, according to his own statement, he faithfully carried out, and no doubt Mr Morin considered it but a sorry revenge. He would rather have a broken window or two any day than broken-down fences on the property which had cost him so dear. The Laird of Laggan was a man who understood how to make a bargain. He bought Ellisland from Mr Miller of Dalswinton in 1791 for £1900, and sold it to Mr Taylor in 1805 for £4430. He was thus enabled to purchase Allanton, a still more important estate in the same neighbourhood, possessed to-day by a gentleman of his family.'—From *Ellisland*, by the Rev. Richard Simpson.

extent of Ellisland,'* and Burns became a party to the transaction by signing a renunciation of his lease. He immediately after sold off his stock and implements, and taking a small house in Dumfries, moved thither with his family and his furniture—'leaving nothing at Ellisland,' says Allan Cunningham, 'but a putting-stone with which he had loved to exercise his strength, a memory of his musings which can never die, and £300 of his money, sunk beyond redemption in a speculation from which all had augured happiness.'

* 'We did not come empty-handed to Dumfries. The Ellisland sale was a very good one, and was well attended. A cow in her first calf brought eighteen guineas, and the purchaser never rued his bargain. Two other cows brought good prices. They had been presented by Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop.'—*Mrs Burns's Memoranda.*

CHAPTER IV.

DUMFRIES: NOVEMBER 1791—JULY 1793.

DUMFRIES is a compact and prosperous little county town, situated on the Nith at the point where it becomes navigable. The environs are beautiful; there is one specially attractive spot, the peninsula, beneath the junction of Nith and its tributary the Cluden, on which stand the ruins of Lincluden Abbey. Dumfries was, at the end of last century, like most small towns of its type, cursed rather than blessed by the partial or entire idleness of large classes of its inhabitants—men living in retirement on competencies, well-to-do professional men, and tradesmen whose shop-duties did not occupy much of their time. In accordance with the fashion of the time, the tavern * was the favourite meeting-place. Yet the town was by no means an unpleasant place to live in. The Rev. Dr Burnside, in his MS. History of Dumfries, says of his parishioners, at the time when Burns became one of them: 'In their private manners they are social and polite; and the town, together with the neighbourhood a few miles around it, furnishes a society amongst whom a person with a moderate income may spend his days with as much enjoyment, perhaps, as in any part of the kingdom whatever.'

Burns's removal to Dumfries coincided with a marked development in his political opinions. In the earlier years of the French Revolution, it does not appear that he took much interest in the subject; nor can there be observed any trace of advanced liberalism

* In 1793 there were in Dumfries two large inns, a coffee-house, and several taverns; no fewer than 75 persons took out licenses for the sale of spirituous liquors, and about 20 more, on an average, were fined annually for selling liquor without license.

in his writings or action up to the latter part of 1791. In this respect he did not differ from the great bulk of British society, for until the publication of Burke's pamphlet the proceedings of the 'patriotic' party in France had attracted comparatively little attention. There were as yet no democratic publications, no ultra-reforming societies. The active sympathisers with the Revolution were a small party of ardent equalitarians chiefly belonging to the Nonconformist bodies in England and the Dissenting communions in Scotland. It was only now that the violent words and deeds of the revolutionary party in the Legislative Assembly of France began to be viewed with serious uneasiness by the British Government. Cautious politicians commenced to fear that the new *régime* was not tending to quiet or sober courses. On the other hand, the more ardent minds were loath to see danger ahead. It is at this crisis that we find the mind of Burns beginning to kindle to French politics. It was natural enough for him, with those democratic sympathies which underlay his Jacobitism, to adopt the doctrines which were now causing alarm to the British and all other reigning families. He would not, indeed, have readily sanctioned any violent changes in the constitution of his country, but his heart was with the 'patriots' in France and against their sovereign and the states who would have replaced him in full authority.

It is more than possible that Burns felt depressed by his surroundings in Dumfries. The house which he occupied on the north side of the Wee Vennel, now known as Bank Street, consisted of three small rooms, the central one, which he used as a study, being no larger than a bedcloset. Perhaps however the tone of his first letter to Ainslie written from Dumfries is adequately enough explained by the opening sentences:

TO ROBERT AINSLIE, ESQ.

MY DEAR AINSLIE—Can you minister to a mind diseased? Can you, amid the horrors of penitence, regret, remorse, headache, nausea, and all the rest of the d—d hounds of hell that beset a poor wretch who has been guilty of the sin of drunkenness—can you speak peace to a troubled soul?

Misérable perdu that I am! I have tried every thing that used to amuse me, but in vain: here must I sit, a monument of the vengeance laid up in store for the wicked, slowly counting every click of the clock

as it slowly—slowly, numbers over these lazy scoundrels of hours, who, d—n them, are ranked up before me, every one at his neighbour's backside, and every one with a burden of anguish on his back, to pour on my devoted head—and there is none to pity me. My wife scolds me! my business torments me and my sins come staring me in the face, every one telling a more bitter tale than his fellow. * * I began 'Elibanks and Elibraes,' but the stanzas fell unenjoyed and unfinished from my listless tongue; at last I luckily thought of reading over an old letter of yours that lay by me in my book case, and I felt some thing, for the first time since I opened my eyes, of pleasurable existence.—— Well—I begin to breathe a little since I began to write you. How are you and what are you doing? How goes Law? Apropos, for connexion's sake, do not address me as 'Supervisor,' for that is an honor I cannot pretend to—I am on the list, as we call it, for a Supervisorship, and will be called out by and bye to act as one; but at present I am a simple gauger, tho' t'other day I got an appointment to an excise division of £25 *per annum* better than the rest. My present income, down money, is £70 *per annum*. . . .

I have one or two good fellows here whom you would be glad to know. . . . R. B.

That depression would not be at all lessened on being reminded of one of his Edinburgh 'imprudences'—and of all persons in the world, too, by Mrs M'Lehose.

MRS M'LEHOSE TO ROBERT BURNS.

[*November* 1791.]

SIR—I take the liberty of addressing a few lines in behalf of your old acquaintance, Jenny Clow, who, to all appearance, is at this moment dying. Obliged, from all the symptoms of a rapid decay, to quit her service, she is gone to a room almost without common necessaries, untended and unmourned. In circumstances so distressing, to whom can she so naturally look for aid as to the father of her child, the man for whose sake she suffered many a sad and anxious night, shut from the world, with no other companions than guilt and solitude? You have now an opportunity to evince you indeed possess these fine feelings you have delineated, so as to claim the just admiration of your country. I am convinced I need add nothing further to persuade you to act as every consideration of humanity, as well as gratitude, must dictate. I am, Sir, your sincere well-wisher, A. M.

ROBERT BURNS TO MRS M'LEHOSE.

DUMFRIES, 23*d November* 1791.

It is extremely difficult, my dear Madam, for me to deny a lady anything; but to a lady whom I regard with all the endearing epithets of

respectful esteem and old friendship, how shall I find the language of refusal? I have, indeed, a shade of a lady, which I keep, and shall ever keep, in the *sanctum sanctorum* of my most anxious care. That lady, though an unfortunate and irresistible conjuncture of circumstances has lost me her esteem, yet she shall be ever, to me—

Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart.

I am rather anxious for her sake, as to her voyage: I pray God my fears may be groundless. By the way, I have this moment a letter from her, with a paragraph or two conceived in so stately a style that I would not pardon it in any created being except herself; but, as the subject interests me much, I shall answer it to you, as I do not know her present address. I am sure she must have told you of a girl, a Jenny Clow, who had the misfortune to make me a father (with contrition I own it), contrary to the laws of our most excellent constitution, in our holy Presbyterian hierarchy.

Mrs M—— tells me a tale of the poor girl's distress that makes my very heart weep blood. I will trust that your goodness will apologize to your delicacy for me, when I beg of you, for Heaven's sake, to send a porter to the poor woman—Mrs M., it seems, knows where she is to be found—with five shillings in my name; and, as I shall be in Edinburgh on Tuesday first, for certain, make the poor wench leave a line for me, before Tuesday, at Mr Mackay's, White Hart Inn, Grassmarket, where I shall put up; and, before I am two hours in town, I shall see the girl and try what is to be done for her relief. I would have taken my boy from her long ago, but she would never consent.

I shall do myself the very great pleasure to call for you when I come to town, and repay you the sum your goodness shall have advanced . . .
and most obedient, ROBERT BURNS.

Whether Jenny Clow is to be identified with May Cameron,* with whom Burns had a liaison when he lived in Edinburgh, or whether he had two intrigues of the same kind about the same time it is now impossible to say. Nor has any trace been yet discovered of any child of either a May Cameron or a Jenny Clow.

Burns went to Edinburgh on the 29th November, and remained a week. Meanwhile a crisis in Mrs M'Lehose's own life was approaching. She had resolved to accept an invitation from her husband and join him in Jamaica. From the 6th December, when he returned to Dumfries, till she sailed, in the following February, Burns kept sending Mrs M'Lehose a series of letters and lyrics inspired by her.

* See Vol. II., p. 121.

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.*

[After transcribing the 'Lament of Mary Queen of Scots,' Burns writes] —Such, My dearest Nancy, were the words of the amiable but unfortunate Mary. Misfortune seems to take a peculiar pleasure in darting her arrows against 'Honest Men and bonny Lasses.' Of this you are too, too just a proof; but may your future fate be a bright exception to the remark. In the words of Hamlet:

Adieu, adieu, adieu! Remember me!

[ROBERT BURNS.]

LEADHILLS, *Thursday noon* [*December* 11, 1791].

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.

DUMFRIES, [15*th December* 1791].

I have some merit, my ever-dearest of women, in attracting and securing the heart of 'Clarinda.' In her I met with the most accomplished of all womankind, the first of all God's works; and yet I, even I, had the good fortune to appear amiable in her sight.

By the by, this is the sixth letter that I have written since I left you; and if you were an ordinary being, as you are a creature very extraordinary—an instance of what God Almighty in the plenitude of His power and the fulness of His goodness can make!—I would never forgive you for not answering my letters.

I have sent in your hair (a part of the parcel you gave me), with a measure, to Mr Bruce, the jeweller in Princes Street, to get a ring done for me. I have likewise sent the verses 'On Sensibility,' altered to

Sensibility, how charming,
Dearest Nancy, thou canst tell, &c.,

to the Editor of the *Scots Songs*, of which you have three volumes, to set to a most beautiful air, out of compliment to the first of women, my ever-beloved, my ever-sacred 'Clarinda.' I shall probably write you tomorrow. In the meantime, from a man who is literally drunk, accept and forgive! R. B.

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.*

DUMFRIES, 27*th December* 1791.

I have yours, my ever-dearest Nancy, this moment. I have just ten minutes before the Post goes, and these I shall employ in sending you

* The MSS. of these two letters are now part of the Watson Collection, in the National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.

some songs I have just been composing to different tunes for the Collection of Songs of which you have three volumes—and of which you *shall* have the fourth.

SONG.

TUNE—*Rory Dall's Port.*

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever; One
Ae fareweel, and then for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage * thee.

Who shall say that Fortune grieves him
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Me, nae cheerful twinkle lights me:
Dark despair around benights me.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,
Naething could resist my Nancy:
But to see her, was to love her;
Love but her, and love for ever.

Had we never lov'd sae kindly!
Had we never lov'd sae blindly!
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Fare-thee-weel, thou first and fairest!
Fare-thee-weel, thou best and dearest!
Thine be ilka joy and treasure, every
Peace, Enjoyment, Love and Pleasure!

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever!
Ae fareweel, Alas, for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.

* 'Wage' is here obviously used with the archaic sense, *stake, pledge.* The old dramatists were partial to this usage of the word.

SONG.

*To an old Scots tune.**

Behold the hour, the boat, arrive!
My dearest Nancy, Oh, fareweel!
Sever'd frae thee can I survive,
Frae thee wham I hae lov'd sae weel!
Endless and deep shall be my grief,
Nae ray o' comfort shall I see
But this most precious, dear belief:
That thou wilt still remember me!

Alang the solitary shore
Where fleeting sea-fowl round me cry,
Across the rolling, dashing roar,
I'll westward turn my wistful eye:
'Happy, thou Indian grove' I'll say,
'Where now my Nancy's path shall be!
While thro' your sweets she holds her way,
O tell me does she muse on me!!!'

SONG.

To a charming plaintive Scots air.

Ance mair I hail thee, thou gloomy December! Once more
Ance mair I hail thee wi' sorrow and care:
Sad was the parting thou makes me remember,
Parting wi' Nancy, Oh, ne'er to meet mair!

* This song is but a slight modification of verses which Burns must have seen in an old Edinburgh magazine, entitled 'Farewell Song to Nicè,' and beginning:

'Behold the fatal hour arrives!
Nicè, my Nicè, ah, farewell!
Severed from thee can I survive,
From thee whom I have loved so well?'

Fond lovers' parting is sweet, painful pleasure,
Hope beaming mild on the soft parting hour,
But the dire feeling, Oh, farewell for ever!
Anguish unmingled and agony pure!

The rest of this song is on the wheels.

Adieu! Adieu!!!

[R. B.]

The poet afterwards added the following verses to the last of the above songs:

Wild as the winter now tearing the forest,
Till the last leaf o' the summer is flown,
Such is the tempest has shaken my bosom,
Since my last hope and last comfort is gone!

Still as I hail thee, thou gloomy December,
Still shall I hail thee wi' sorrow and care;
For sad was the parting thou makes me remember,
Parting wi' Nancy, Oh, ne'er to meet mair!

The fourth stanza of the song to the air 'Rory Dall's Port' Byron placed at the head of his poem, 'The Bride of Abydos.' Scott has remarked that that verse is worth a thousand romances; and Mrs Jameson has said that not only are these lines worth a thousand romances—they are 'in themselves a complete romance. They are,' she adds, 'the alpha and omega of feeling, and contain the essence of an existence of pain and pleasure distilled into one burning drop.'

TO MRS DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES,* 17*th December* 1791.

Many thanks to you, Madam, for your good news respecting the little floweret and the mother-plant. I hope my poetic prayers have been heard and will be answered up to the warmest sincerity of their fullest extent; and then Mrs Henri will find her little darling the representative of his late parent, in every thing but his abridged existence.

* Currie dated this letter from 'Ellisland,' and it is commonly stated that 'The Song of Death' was Burns's last poetical effort before leaving Ellisland. But—if his date of the letter be correct—it must rather be regarded as the first poem of the Dumfries period.

I have just finished the following song which, to a lady the descendant of Wallace and many heroes of his truly illustrious line—and herself the mother of several soldiers, needs neither preface nor apology.

Scene—A Field of Battle—Time of the day, evening—The wounded and dying of the victorious army are supposed to join in the following:

SONG OF DEATH.

AIR—*Oran an Aoig.*

Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth and ye skies,
Now gay with the broad-setting sun!
Farewell, loves and friendships, ye dear, tender ties!
Our race of existence is run.
Thou grim king of terrors, thou life's gloomy foe,
Go, frighten the coward and slave!
Go, teach them to tremble, fell tyrant! but know
No terrors hast thou to the Brave!

Thou strik'st the dull peasant, he sinks in the dark,
Nor saves e'en the wreck of a name;
Thou strik'st the young hero, a glorious mark!
He falls in the blaze of his fame.
In the field of proud Honor, our swords in our hands,
Our king and our country to save,
While victory shines on life's last ebbing sands,
O! who would not die with the Brave!

The circumstance that gave rise to the foregoing verses was—looking over with a musical friend M'Donald's collection of Highland airs, I was struck with one, an Isle of Skye tune, entitled 'Oran an Aoig,' or 'The Song of Death,' to the measure of which I have adapted my stanzas. I have of late composed two or three other little pieces which, ere yon full-orbed moon, whose broad impudent face now stares at old Mother Earth all night, shall have shrunk into a modest crescent, just peeping forth at dewy dawn, I shall find an hour to transcribe for you. *A Dieu je vous commende!* R. B.

Thomas Campbell used to speak of this 'Song of Death' as, in his opinion, one of Burns's most brilliant efforts.

On the 25th January 1792, prior to sailing for Jamaica in the *Roselle*, in which Burns was to have left the country a few years before, Mrs M'Lehose wrote a letter of farewell to Burns:

FROM MRS M'LEHOSE.

25th January 1792.

Agitated, hurried to death, I sit down to write a few lines to you, my ever-dear, dear friend! We are ordered abroad on Saturday,—to sail on Sunday. And now, my dearest Sir, I have a few things to say to you, as the last advice of her who could have lived or died with you! I am happy to know of your applying so steadily to the business you have engaged in; but, oh remember, this life is a short, passing scene! Seek God's favour,—keep His commandments,—be solicitous to prepare for a happy eternity! There, I trust, we will meet, in perfect and never-ending bliss. Read my former letter attentively: let the religious tenets there expressed sink deep into your mind; meditate on them with candour; and your accurate judgment must be convinced that they accord with the words of Eternal Truth! Laugh no more at holy things or holy men: remember 'without holiness, no man shall see God.' Another thing and I have done: as you value my peace, do not write me to Jamaica, untill I let you know you may with safety. Write Mary often. She feels for you! and judges of your present feelings by her own. I am sure you will be happy to hear of my happiness: and I trust you will—soon. If there is time, you may drop me a line ere I go, to inform me if you get this and another letter I wrote you, dated the 21st, which I am afraid of having been neglected to be put into the office.

So it was the Roselle you were to have gone in! I read your letter to-day and reflected deeply on the ways of Heaven! To us they oft appear dark and doubtful; but let us do our duty faithfully, and sooner or later we will have our reward, because 'the Lord God Omnipotent reigns:' every upright mind has here cause to rejoice. And now, adieu. May Almighty God bless you and yours! take you into His blessed favour here; and afterwards receive you into His glory!

Farewell. I will ever, ever remain, Your *real* friend, A. M.

One of the final meetings of Burns and Clarinda is believed to be the subject-matter of the following song, which, however, must be regarded as a poetical rather than a historical recital:

O MAY, THY MORN WAS NE'ER SAE SWEET.

O May, thy morn was ne'er sae sweet
  As the mirk night o' December! dark
For sparkling was the rosy wine,
  And secret was the chamber;
And dear was she I dare na name,
  But I will ay remember;
And dear was she I dare na name,
  But I will ay remember.

And here 's to them, that, like oursel,
  Can push about the jorum ! liquor
And here 's to them that wish us weel :
  May a' that 's gude watch o'er them !
And here 's to them, we dare na tell,
  The dearest o' the quorum !
And here 's to them, we dare na tell,
  The dearest o' the quorum !

In the course of the ensuing summer, while Mrs M'Lehose was absent in the West Indies, the poet's feelings subsided into comparative calm, and he then* composed the beautiful pastoral :

MY NANIE'S AWA.

TUNE—*There 'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.*

Now in her green mantle blythe Nature arrays,
And listens the lambkins that bleat o'er the braes, slopes
While birds warble welcome in ilka green shaw ;
But to me it 's delightless—my Nanie 's awa.

The snawdrap and primrose our woodlands adorn,
And violets bathe in the weet o' the morn :
They pain my sad bosom, sae sweetly they blaw,
They mind me o' Nanie—and Nanie 's awa.

Thou lav'rock that springs frae the dews of the lawn lark
The shepherd to warn o' the grey-breaking dawn,
And thou mellow mavis that hails the night-fa', thrush
Give over for pity—my Nanie 's awa.

Come Autumn, sae pensive, in yellow and grey,
And soothe me wi' tidings o' Nature's decay :
The dark, dreary Winter, and wild-driving snaw
Alane can delight me—now Nanie 's awa.

It is possible, also, that at the same time he tried to conceive poetically her feelings in seeking a reunion with her husband :

* So at least it has been confidently stated by Mrs M'Lehose's grandson. The song was not sent by Burns to Thomson till December 9, 1794.

WANDERING WILLIE.

[FIRST VERSION.]

Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Now tired with wandering, haud awa hame; make for home
Come to my bosom, my ae only dearie,
And tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

Loud blew the cauld winter winds at our parting;
It was na the blast brought the tear in my e'e:
Now welcome the simmer, and welcome my Willie,
The simmer to nature, my Willie to me.

Ye hurricanes, rest in the cave o' your slumbers!
O how your wild horrors a lover alarms!
Awaken, ye breezes! row gently, ye billows! roll
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

But if he 's forgotten his faithfullest Nannie,
O still flow between us, thou wide-roaring main!
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
But, dying, believe that my Willie 's my ain!* own

In a series of letters dated about June 1791, we have seen Burns expressing himself warmly in behalf of his friend Clarke, teacher at Moffat, whom he regarded as suffering undeserved persecution. He appears in the interval to have continued his efforts for Clarke.

* This song appears to have had a prototype in an old one of which two stanzas have been preserved:

'Here awa, there awa, here awa, Willie,
Here awa, there awa, here awa hame;
Lang have I sought thee, dear have I bought thee,
Now I hae gotten my Willie again.

'Through the lang muir I have followed my Willie,
Through the lang muir I have followed him hame,
Whatever betide us, nought shall divide us,
Love now rewards all my sorrow and pain.'

A second version of this song will be found *supra*.

TO MR JAMES CLARKE, MOFFAT.

DUMFRIES, 10*th January* 1792.

I received yours this moment, my dear sir. I sup with Captain Riddel in town to-night, else I had gone to Carse directly. Courage, *mon ami!* The day may, after all, be yours: but at any rate, there is other air to breathe than that of Moffat, pestiferously tainted as it is with the breath of that arch-scoundrel, J———. There are two quotations from two poets which, in situations such as yours, were congenial to my soul. Thomson says—

> What proves the hero truly great,
> Is never, never to despair.

And Dr Young—

> ———On Reason build Resolve
> That column of true majesty in man.

To-morrow you shall know the result of my consultation with Captain Riddel. Yours, R. B.

Burns now met a young married woman who played a considerable part in the latest years of his life. Maria Banks Woodley was a daughter of William Woodley, governor of St Kitts and the Leeward Islands, and had been married at a very early age to a younger brother of the laird of Carse, Walter Riddel, owner of an estate in Antigua, who had lately returned to his native country. On a small estate, four miles south-west of Dumfries, there is a handsome mansion, which was called 'The Holm' so long as it was the country residence of the eminent advocate Andrew Crosbie, commonly reputed to have been the prototype of Counsellor Pleydell in *Guy Mannering*. It was afterwards bought by a gentleman named Goldie, who called it Goldielea, after his own name and that of his wife—Leigh: Mrs Goldie was a descendant of the elder branch of that English family. Mr Riddel, purchasing the place from Mr Goldie, named it Woodley Park, after *his* wife; and so it continued to be called till, owing to non-payment of the purchase-money, it reverted to Mr Goldie, and regained its former name of Goldielea. Mrs Walter Riddel, who was still under twenty, though already a mother, possessed beauty, ability, and accomplishments; had a

taste for literature and natural history; could write passable verse; and delighted in the society of men of talent. The genius of Burns instantly attracted her, and he became a frequent visitor at Woodley Park. There he found a fine library, comprising not only English but foreign books. For many reasons, then, Woodley Park became a favourite resort of Burns's. Both host and hostess treated him as their equal in society. He dined with them and their friends; and Mrs Riddel visited at his house in Dumfries.

Mrs Riddel was at this time cherishing a literary ambition of her own, and wished to consult competent authorities upon it. It was not, however, of a poetical nature, and she does not seem to have explained it to Burns. As it embraced, in an account of a voyage to Madeira and the Leeward Isles, some sketches of natural history, she seems to have thought that Burns's friend, Smellie, would be able to give her some assistance, and she asked the poet for an introduction. The request seems to have staggered Burns. To present a beautiful, young, accomplished woman of fashion to the almost elaborately rude old naturalist, who never made a bow in his life to man or woman—how was such a task to be accomplished? The style in which he performed it is amusing enough:

TO MR WILLIAM SMELLIE, PRINTER, EDINBURGH.

DUMFRIES, *January* 22, 1792.

I sit down, my dear Sir, to introduce a young Lady to you, and a Lady in the first ranks of fashion, too. What a task! You, who care no more for the herd of animals called young Ladies than you do for the herd of animals called young Gentlemen. You, who despise and detest the groupings and combinations of Fashion: an idiot Painter that seems industrious to place staring Fools and unprincipled Knaves in the fore-ground of his picture, while men of Sense and Honesty are too often thrown in the dimmest shades. Mrs Riddel, who will take this letter to town with her and send it you, is a character that, even in your own way, as a Naturalist and a Philosopher, would be an acquisition to your acquaintance. The Lady, too, is a Votary of the Muses; and as I think myself somewhat of a judge in my own trade, I assure you that her verses, always correct and often elegant, are much beyond the common run of the Lady-Poetesses of the day. She is a great admirer of your book;* and hearing me say that I was acquainted with you, she

* *The Philosophy of Natural History.*

begged to be known to you, as she is just going to pay her first visit to our Caledonian Capital. I told her that her best way was to desire her near relation, and your intimate friend, Craigdarroch, to have you at his house while she was there; and, lest you might think of a lively West Indian girl of eighteen, as girls of eighteen too often deserve to be thought of, I should take care to remove that prejudice. To be impartial, however, in appreciating the Lady's merits: she has one unlucky failing—a failing which you will easily discover, as she seems rather pleased with indulging in it; and a failing that you will as easily pardon, as it is a sin which very much besets yourself: Where she dislikes or despises, she is apt to make no more a secret of it than where she esteems and respects.

I will not present you the unmeaning 'Compliments of the Season,' but I will send you my warmest wishes and ardent prayers that Fortune may never throw your subsistence to the mercy of a Knave, or set your Character on the judgment of a Fool; but that, Upright and Erect, you may walk to an honest grave, where men of Letters shall say: 'Here lies a Man who did honour to Science,' and Men of Worth shall say: 'Here lies a man who did honour to Human Nature.' I am ever, with the most grateful sincerity, my dear Sir, yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

Mrs Riddel visited Edinburgh in January: immediately on arrival she forwarded Burns's letter of introduction with this note:

Sunday Evening, ST ANDREWS-SQUARE.

Mrs Riddel presents her compliments to Mr Smellie and encloses a note which she took charge of for him from Mr Burns. Mr Smellie will see by the date that it was written a week ago; but Mrs Riddel was detained all that time on the road and did not arrive at Edinburgh till this morning, otherwise she would certainly have sent it earlier to Mr Smellie.

She and Smellie seem to have drawn to each other at once, and soon after (on the 7th March) Mrs Riddel transmitted to him the manuscript of her book of travels. In an accompanying letter she alludes to the poet: 'Robie Burns dined with us the other day. He is in good health and spirits; but I fear his muse will not be so frequent in her inspirations, now that he has forsaken his rural occupations.' Smellie read the lady's manuscript with surprise: 'When I considered your youth' (he wrote on March 27), 'and still more, your sex, the perusal of your ingenious and judicious work, if I had not previously had

the pleasure of your conversation, the devil himself could not have frightened me into the belief that a female human creature could, in the bloom of youth, beauty and, consequently, of giddiness, have produced a performance so much out of the line of your ladies' works. Smart little poems, flippant romances, are not uncommon. But science, minute observation, accurate description and excellent composition are qualities seldom to be met with in the female world.'*

The original proposal had been for a privately-printed issue, but at Smellie's suggestion the book was printed and exposed to sale. It was not ready till near the end of the year; † among the recipients of a copy was Burns.

TO MRS WALTER RIDDEL.

MADAM—I return you my most sincere thanks for the honor you have done me in presenting me with a copy of your Book. Be assured I shall ever keep it sacred. R. B.

The acquaintance between the pair made some progress during the summer, and at length, in September, the eccentric naturalist came to Dumfries and spent some time with the lady and his friend the poet. The young authoress induced Smellie to present his extraordinary figure at one of the assemblies of Dumfries, and there is a tradition that he and Burns received some kind of public entertainment from the magistrates. Mrs Riddel and Smellie continued intimate friends until the death of the naturalist in 1795.

TO MR PETER HILL.

DUMFRIES, *5th Feb.* 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I send you by the bearer, Mr Clarke, a particular friend of mine, six pounds and a shilling, which you will dispose of as follows:—£5, 10s. per account I owe Mr Robt. Burn, architect, for erecting the stone over poor Fergusson. He was two years in erecting it after I commissioned him for it; and I have been two years in paying him after he sent me his account: so he and I are quits. He had the hardness to

* Kerr's *Memoirs of William Smellie* (Edinburgh, 1811, 2 vols.). This work contains the correspondence between Mrs Riddel and Smellie.

† Mrs Riddel's work is announced in the *Scots Magazine* of November 1792, as published, under the following title:—*Voyages to the Madeira and Leeward Caribbee Islands; with Sketches of the Natural History of these Islands.* By Maria R******. Cadell, London; Hill, Edinburgh.

ask me interest on the sum; but, considering that the money was due by one Poet for putting a tombstone over another, he may, with grateful surprise, thank Heaven that he ever saw a farthing of it.

With the remainder of the money, pay yourself for the *Office of a Messenger* that I bought of you; and send me by Mr Clarke a note of its price. Send me, likewise, the fifth volume of the *Observer*, by Mr Clarke; and if any money remain, let it stand to account.

My best compliments to Mrs Hill. I sent you a maukin [hare], by last week's Fly, which I hope you received. Yours most sincerely,

ROBT. BURNS.

The following is a literal transcript of the account here mentioned:

MR ROBERT BURNS,

To J. & R. BURN .

June 23, 1789.

	£	s	d
54 Feet Polished Craigleith Stone for a Headstone for Robert Fergusson at 1s.	2	14	0
10 Feet 8 inches double Base Moulding, at 1s. 6d	0	16	0
4 Large Iron Cramps	0	2	10
2 Stones to set the base on, at 1s.	0	2	0
320 Letters on do., at 8s. [per 100]	1	5	8
Lead, and setting up ditto	0	5	0
Gravedigger's dues	0	5	0

Robert Burn, in the letter accompanying the account, addressed the poet with the familiarity of an acquaintance. After apologising for the delay in the erection of the stone, he facetiously says: 'I shall be happy to receive orders of a like nature for as many more of your friends that have gone hence as you please.'

TO ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM—To-morrow, or some day soon, I will write you as entertaining a letter as I can; in the meantime, take a scrawl of very serious business. You remember Mr Clarke, Master of the Grammar School at Moffat, whom I formerly recommended to your good offices: the crisis of his fate is just at hand. Mr M'Murdo of Drumlanrig, Fergusson of Craigdarroch and Riddell of Glenriddell, gentlemen who know Clarke personally and intimately, have strained and are straining every nerve to serve him, but alas! poor Clarke's foes are mighty! Lord Hopetoun, spurred on by those infernal creatures that always go between a Man and his inferiors, has sworn his destruction; irritated as he justly is that any Plebeian, and the son of a Plebeian, should dare to oppose existence—a trifling affair, against his Lordship's high and mighty will. What I know, and *you* know that I would do for a friend of yours, I ask

of you for a friend—a much-esteemed friend, of mine. Get the Principal's interest in his favour. Be not denied! To interpose between lordly cruelty and helpless merit is a task worthy of you to ask and him to execute. In the meantime, if you meet with Craigdarroch, or chance to wait on him (by the bye, I wish you would mention this very business), he will inform you of the great merits of one party and the demerits of the other.

You shall hear from me soon. God bless you! ROBT. BURNS.

DUMFRIES, *5th Feb.* 1792.

It may have been about this time that Burns inscribed the following lines on Fergusson in a copy of *The World*:

Ill-fated genius! Heaven-taught Fergusson!
What heart that feels and will not yield a tear:
To think life's sun did set ere well begun
To shed its influence on thy bright career!
O why should truest worth and genius pine
Beneath the iron grasp of Want and Woe,
While titled knaves and idiot greatness shine
In all the splendour Fortune can bestow!

TO MR JAMES CLARKE.

DUMFRIES, *17th Feb.* 1792.

MY DEAR SIR—If this finds you at Moffat, or as soon as it finds you at Moffat, you must without delay wait on Mr Riddel, as he has been very kindly thinking of you in an affair that has occurred of a clerk's place in Manchester, which, if your hopes are desperate in your present business, he proposes procuring for you. I know your gratitude for past, as well as hopes for future, favours will induce you to pay every attention to Glenriddel's wishes; as he is almost the only, and undoubtedly the best, friend that your unlucky fate has left you.

Apropos, I just now hear that you have beat your foes, *every tail hollow*. Huzza! *Io triumphe!* Mr Riddel, who is at my elbow, says that if it is so, he begs that you will wait on him directly; and I know you are too good a man not to pay your respects to your saviour. Yours,

R. B.*

A few days after the date of the last letter occurred one of the most curious events in the life of Burns. It may be related in the words of Lockhart:

'At that period [1792] a great deal of contraband traffic, chiefly

* At the end of the transcript, in the Glenriddel prose volume, of the letter to Williamson (September 1791), Burns added: 'Bravo! Clarke. In spite of Hopetoun and his myrmidons thou camest off victorious!'

from the Isle of Man, was going on along the coasts of Galloway and Ayrshire, and the whole of the revenue-officers from Gretna to Dumfries were placed under the orders of a superintendent residing in Annan, who exerted himself zealously in intercepting the descent of the smuggling vessels. On the 27th of February, a suspicious-looking brig was discovered in the Solway Firth, and Burns was one of the party whom the superintendent conducted to watch her motions. She got into shallow water the day afterwards, and the officers were enabled to discover that her crew were numerous, armed, and not likely to yield without a struggle. Lewars, a brother-exciseman, an intimate friend of our poet, was accordingly sent to Dumfries for a guard of dragoons; the superintendent himself, Mr Crawford, proceeded on a similar errand to Ecclefechan, and Burns was left with some men under his orders, to watch the brig and prevent landing or escape. From the private journal of one of the excisemen—now in my hands—it appears that Burns manifested considerable impatience while thus occupied, being left for many hours in a wet salt-marsh, with a force which he knew to be inadequate to the purpose it was meant to fulfil. One of his comrades hearing him abuse his friend Lewars in particular, for being slow about his journey, the man answered that he also wished the devil had him for his pains, and that Burns in the meantime would do well to indite a song upon the sluggard: Burns said nothing; but after taking a few strides by himself among the reeds and shingle, rejoined his party, and chanted to them the well-known ditty:

THE DEIL'S AWA WI' TH' EXCISEMAN.*

TUNE—*The Looking-glass.*

The deil cam fiddlin thro' the town,
And danc'd awa wi' th' Exciseman;
And ilka wife cries 'Auld Mahoun,† every
I wish you luck o' the prize, man.'

Chorus—The deil 's awa, the deil 's awa,
The deil 's awa wi' th' Exciseman,
He 's danc'd awa, he 's danc'd awa,
He 's danc'd awa wi' th' Exciseman.

* The song is supposed to be sung by smugglers and their sympathisers.
† An old form of *Mahomet*, identified with the devil.

We 'll mak our maut and we 'll brew our drink,
We 'll laugh, sing and rejoice, man !
And mony braw thanks to the meikle black deil hearty—big
That danc'd awa wi' th' Exciseman.

There 's threesome reels, there 's foursome reels,
There 's hornpipes and strathspeys, man,
But the ae best dance e'er cam to the Land
Was 'The deil 's awa wi' th' Exciseman.'

'Lewars arrived shortly after with his dragoons; and Burns, putting himself at their head, waded sword in hand to the brig, and was the first to board her. The crew lost heart, and submitted, though their numbers were greater than those of the assailing force. The vessel was condemned, and, with all her arms and stores, sold next day at Dumfries; upon which occasion, Burns, whose conduct had been highly commended, thought fit to purchase four carronades by way of trophy.'

Lockhart goes on to say that the poet sent these guns as a present 'to the French Convention,' with a letter testifying his admiration and respect, and that the gift and letter were intercepted at the custom-house at Dover. The whole affair was treated by Allan Cunningham as fabulous; but it seems to have been substantiated in the main particulars by Joseph Train, the well-known antiquary and friend of Sir Walter Scott, who, in 1825, succeeded Burns's friend, John Lewars, as Supervisor of Excise in Dumfries, from Crawford's diary; an account of the seizure and sale of the vessel, the brig *Rosamond*, by Burns himself; and a document written by Lewars, detailing the circumstance of Burns having purchased the four carronades, and despatched them as a present to the French Assembly. In the sale-catalogue, in Burns's handwriting, the poet enters himself as the purchaser of the four guns for £3.*

Some doubt may, nevertheless, remain as to the gravity of

* In a letter to Dr Robert Carruthers, of Inverness, Train stated that he obtained the documents on which he founded his statements from the widow of Lewars on his death in 1827, that he forwarded them to Sir Walter Scott, and that Scott tried to test the accuracy of Lewars' information by examining a file of the *Moniteur* for 1792, but that finding no account of the receipt of the carronades there he applied to the Custom House authorities, who, after search, found the fact recorded that the guns addressed to the Assembly had been seized at Dover, as stated by Lewars. Unfortunately the documents vouched for by him have not been recovered.

Burns's offence in presenting the guns to 'The Convention.' Lockhart says: 'We were not, it is true, at war with France; but every one knew and felt that we were to be so ere long; and nobody can pretend that Burns was not guilty on this occasion of a most absurd and presumptuous breach of decorum.' A careful investigation of dates and attendant circumstances shows Lockhart to be in error. At the time when Burns purchased the four carronades there was no such body in existence as the French Convention. The Convention was not constituted till the ensuing September. If, therefore, Burns did buy four carronades in February, and sent them to Paris, he must have addressed them to the Legislative Assembly—a body which was at this moment supporting a ministry of the Constitutional party around Louis XVI., and showing every symptom of pacific feeling towards England. The 28th of February 1792 was less than a month from the day when George III. opened Parliament with a speech containing little besides congratulations on the peace and internal prosperity of the country. 'Unquestionably,' said Pitt, in his famous Budget speech of this period, 'there never was a time in the history of this country when from the situation of Europe we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than at the present moment.'* Not a whisper was yet heard of British intervention in the quarrel between France and the Emperor of Germany. Not till August was Gower, the British Ambassador, recalled from Paris; not till the following January was war proclaimed by England against France. It is true we are told that the authorities at Dover intercepted the guns; but we do not know how long it was before they reached that place. Considering what the means of transport were at that date, it could not be a very short time. If they were not at Dover before the end of April—war having been proclaimed by the French against the Emperor—the British government might feel warranted in stopping the guns, merely from a sense of the impropriety of sending even this small modicum of aid to a power which was arraying itself against one of our allies. It cannot of course be denied that the British court viewed the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly with dislike even so early as February. M. de Perigord—afterwards so well known as Talleyrand—having then

* See *Pitt* (p. 121), by Lord Rosebery. Macmillan & Co., 1891.

come to sound the British ministry as to how they would regard a possible attack by the French on the Emperor's Flemish domains, found himself slighted at the levee, and was passed without notice by the Queen at a drawing-room. But these were only premonitory symptoms of what was to follow. And the essential fact remains that the minutest daily chronicles of the time bear no trace of an apprehension on the part of the public that we were likely to become the enemies of France.* If Burns, then, despatched these guns soon after purchasing them, he may be said at the worst to have committed, for a British citizen and public officer, a somewhat eccentric and audaciously generous action; but he cannot be accused of an 'absurd and presumptuous breach of decorum;' nor does it appear that his act was regarded in this light by any person entitled to call his conduct in question.

It may be inferred from his purchase of the four guns that Burns had at this time a little spare money. Of this there are other signs, such as his settling Hill's account for books in December, and soon after discharging the debt for Fergusson's tombstone. He afterwards acknowledged to his brother Gilbert that he had incurred some debts in consequence of carelessness about expense when he settled in Dumfries. Thus we see that Burns, when he had more money than was required for bare subsistence, easily allowed it, one way or another—generally in deeds of kindness—to slip through his fingers. The small sum accruing from the sale of his farming stock did not probably outlast his arrival in Dumfries many months.

TO J. LEVEN, ESQ., GEN. SUPERVISOR, EXCISE OFFICE, EDINBURGH.

[*March* 1792.]

SIR—I have sealed and secured Lawson's Tea, but no permit has yet appeared, nor can it appear before Tuesday at the nearest; so there is

* A few gleanings from the newspapers of the day will help us to a right estimate of Burns's act:—

In the summer of 1791, a gentleman of Glasgow had communicated to Lafayette a plan for artillery carried by horses, and four guns so mounted were in consequence used by his troops with great effect at the battle of Maubeuge, June 9, 1792.

In the latter part of January 1792, a subscription was opened at Glasgow 'to aid the French in carrying on the war against the emigrant princes or any foreign power by whom they may be attacked.'—'It is said that £1200 have already been subscribed.'

On 15th May, it is stated as a report that sixteen sail of the line are to be fitted out; 'but we do not believe it, as we hope our ministry are too prudent to think of involving this nation in any disputes that may arise from the French Revolution.'

the greater chance of the condemnation. I shrewdly suspect the Newcastle House, Rankine and Sons, is the firm; they will think that the goods being regularly delivered to a Carrier, with proper permit, will exonerate them as to further responsibility; and Lawson, on his part, is determined not to have anything to do with it; so our process may be the easier managed.

The moment that the permits arrive, as I am pretty certain they will, I shall inform you; but, in the meantime, when the three remaining boxes arrive, as they cannot, *in quality*, correspond with the permit, and besides, will be at least beyond the limited time a full week—are not they seizable?

Mr Mitchell mentioned to you a ballad which I composed and sung at one of his Excise Court dinners: here it is:—

[The Deil's awa wi' th' Exciseman.*]

* See *ante*. This allusion seems at first sight to confirm the original account given to the public by Cromek. Of the composition of the ballad Cromek says that at a meeting of excisemen in Dumfries, Burns, on being called for a song, wrote the verses on the back of a letter, and handed them to the chairman. In 1890, Mr Frank Miller, of Annan, in a paper read before the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Antiquarian Society, gave another account of the origin of the poem. He stated, on the authority of two recently-deceased gentlemen of the name of Williamson, that it was read to a large company assembled in a house in the High Street of Annan. Their grandfather used to tell in his old age that he was one of that company that heard Burns recite the verses. One thing only in this connection is absolutely certain: Burns must have obtained the first suggestion for his verses from a poem by a Northumbrian rhymer, named Thomas Whittell, who died at Hartburn, in Northumberland, in 1736. Among his poems, which were extensively circulated in the district in which he lived, and which were published in a volume by William Robson, schoolmaster of Morpeth, in 1815, there is one, probably written in 1733, when Sir Robert Walpole instituted the Excise, the character of which may be gathered from these extracts:

'Did you not hear of a new-found dance
That lately was devised on,
And how the Devil was tired out
By dancing with an Exciseman?

He toes, he trips, he skips, he leaps,
As if he would bruise his thighs, man;
Sometimes the Devil made the better dance,
And sometimes the Exciseman.

The music was an enchanted pipe,
With which the piper plies on;
Betwixt them there was many a wipe,
The Devil was in the Exciseman.

For sarabands, antics, minuets, jigs,
Or any dance you could devise on,
Although the Devil did dance them well,
He came not near the Exciseman.

At last the Devil began to faint,
And saw he would lose the prize, man;
And, like a dull jade that had a taint,
The other had cleared his eyes, man.

If you honor my ballad by making it one of your charming *bon vivant* effusions, it will secure it undoubted celebrity.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your obliged and devoted humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

On the 10th of April of this year the Royal Archers of Scotland sent Burns a diploma as a member of their corporation.* He subsequently refers to this honour in a letter to Cunningham.

The following letter is interesting as showing that Burns had forgotten—for a time at least—the behaviour of his publisher, and was now willing to co-operate with him in the issue of an enlarged edition of his poems. It also supplies positively startling evidence of the very modest estimate Burns made of the value and originality of his work.

TO WILLIAM CREECH, ESQ.

DUMFRIES, 16*th April* 1792.

SIR—I this moment have yours, and were it not that habit, as usual, has deadened conscience, my criminal indolence should lead me an uneasy life of reproach. I ought long ago to have written you on this very business.

Now, to try a language of which I am not half master, I shall assume, as well as I can, the man of business. I suppose, at a gross guess, that I could add of new materials, to your two volumes, about fifty pages. I would also correct and retrench a good deal. These said fifty pages you know are as much mine as the thumb-stall I have just now drawn on my finger which I unfortunately gashed in mending my pen. A few books which I very much want are all the recompence I crave, together with as

He stood like a mot, and could not play toot,
  He could neither vault nor rise, man ;
But when the Devil was tired out,
  He carried away the Exciseman.

He that will take such a revel,
  For me shall have the prize, man ;
'Tis equal to me, I like to be civil,
  Such company I despise, man.

For he that danceth with the Devil,
  I count him not a wise man ;
His company is not fit for any,
  Except it be an Exciseman.'

It is not at all impossible that Burns may, with such verses in his mind, have made the first rough draft of his own poem while waiting for Lewars on the Solway shore, and read finished copies of it at an Exciseman's dinner in Dumfries and a convivial gathering in Annan.

* This diploma is now preserved in the Burns Monument at Edinburgh.

many copies of this new edition of my own works as Friendship or Gratitude shall prompt me to present. There are three men whom you know and whose friendly patronage I think I can trouble so far —Messrs M'Kenzie, D. Stewart, and F. Tytler : to any of these I shall submit my MSS. for their strictures ; and also let *them* say on my informing them —I mean any of them—what *Authors* I want, to what value of them I am entitled.* If he adjudged me a 'Tom Thumb,' I am content. The 'Man of Feeling' and Professor Stewart are, I hear, busy with works of their own, for which reason I shall prefer Tytler. So soon as I hear from you, I shall write Mr Tytler ; and in a fortnight more I shall put my MSS. in his hands.

If the thing were possible that I could receive the proof-sheets by our Dumfries Fly, which runs three times a week, I would earnestly wish to correct them myself.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your very humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

TO MR JAMES JOHNSON.

DUMFRIES, *May* 1792.

DEAR SIR—This will be presented to you by one of your subscribers † and a gentleman to whose musical talents you are much indebted for getting you Scotch tunes. Let him know your progress, and how you come on with the work. Inclosed is one song out of many I have yet to send you ; and likewise I inclose you another and, I think, a better, set of Craigieburnwood, which you will give to Mr Clarke to compare with the former set, as I am extremely anxious to have that song right. I am, dear Sir, yours, ROBT. BURNS.

TO MR STEPHEN CLARKE, EDINBURGH.

Mr Burns begs leave to present his most respectful compliments to Mr Clarke. Mr B. some time ago did himself the honour of writing Mr C. respecting coming out to the country to give a little musical instruction in a highly respectable family, where Mr C. may have his own terms and may be as happy as indolence, the devil, and the gout will permit him. Mr B. knows well that Mr C. is engaged so long with another family ; but cannot Mr C. find two or three weeks to spare, to each of them? Mr B. is deeply impressed with, and awfully conscious of, the high importance of Mr C.'s time, whether in the winged moments of symphonious exhibition at the keys of Harmony, while listening seraphs cease their own less delightful strains ; or in the drowsy arms of

* That is to say, he desired, at a time when he must have felt in need of money, to take anything Creech would give for the additional poems, in *books* only.

† Stephen Clarke, to whom the next letter is addressed. See note, Vol. II., p. 183.

slumberous repose, in the arms of his dearly-beloved elbow-chair, where the frowsy, but potent, power of indolence circumfuses her vapours round and sheds her dews on the head of her darling Son.

But half a line, conveying half a meaning, from Mr C. would make Mr B. the very happiest of mortals.

6th July 1792.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

ANNAN WATER FOOT, *22d August* 1792.

Do not blame me for it, Madam:—my own conscience, hackneyed and weatherbeaten as it is in watching and reproving my vagaries, follies, indolence, &c., has continued to blame and punish me sufficiently. . . .

Do you think it possible, my dear and honoured friend, that I could be so lost to gratitude for many favors, to esteem for much worth and to the honest, kind, pleasurable tie of, now, old acquaintance, and, I hope and am sure, of progressive, increasing friendship—as, for a single day, not to think of you—to ask the Fates what they are doing and about to do with my much-loved friend and her wide-scattered connexions, and to beg of them to be as kind to you and yours as they possibly can?

Apropos (though how it is apropos, I have not leisure to explain), do you not know that I am almost in love with an acquaintance of yours? —Almost! said I—I am in love, sousc! over head and ears, deep as the most unfathomable abyss of the boundless ocean; but the word Love, owing to the *intermingledoms* of the good and the bad, the pure and the impure, in this world, being rather an equivocal term for expressing one's sentiments and sensations, I must do justice to the sacred purity of my attachment. Know, then, that the heart-struck awe; the distant humble approach; the delight we should have in gazing upon and listening to a Messenger of Heaven appearing in all the unspotted purity of his celestial home among the coarse, polluted, far inferior sons of men, to deliver to them tidings that make their hearts swim in joy and their imaginations soar in transport—such, so delighting and so pure, were the emotions of my soul on meeting the other day with Miss Lesley Baillie, your neighbour at Mayville. Mr B., with his two daughters, accompanied by Mr H. of G., passing through Dumfries a few days ago, on their way to England, did me the honor of calling on me; on which I took my horse (though God knows I could ill spare the time) and accompanied them fourteen or fifteen miles and dined and spent the day with them. 'Twas about nine, I think, when I left them; and, riding home, I composed the following ballad, of which you will probably think you have a dear bargain, as it will cost you another groat of postage. You must know that there is an old ballad beginning with—

My bonnie Lizzie Bailie,
I'll rowe thee in my plaidie, &c.

So I parodied it as follows, which is literally the first copy, 'unanointed, unannealed,' as Hamlet says :—

BONIE LESLEY.

O saw ye bonie Lesley
As she gaed o'er the Border?
She 's gane, like Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther!

To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever :
For Nature made her what she is,
And never made anither!

Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
Thy subjects, we before thee;
Thou art divine, fair Lesley,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

The Deil he could na scaith thee — harm
Or aught that wad belang thee : — should belong to
He 'd look into thy bonie face
And say—'I canna wrang thee!'

The Powers aboon will tent thee, — above—watch
Misfortune sha'na steer thee : — shall not molest
Thou 'rt like themsel' sae lovely
That ill they 'll ne'er let near thee.

Return again, fair Lesley,
Return to Caledonie!
That we may brag we hae a lass
There 's nane again sae bonie! *

So much for ballads. I regret that you are gone to the east country, as I am to be in Ayrshire in about a fortnight. This world of ours, notwithstanding it has many good things in it, yet it has ever had this curse, that two or three people who would be the happier the oftener

* Miss Lesley Baillie became Mrs Robert Cumming of Logie in 1799, and died in Edinburgh, July 1843.

they met together are, almost without exception, always so placed as never to meet but once or twice a-year, which, considering the few years of a man's life, is a very great 'evil under the sun,' which I do not recollect that Solomon has mentioned in his catalogue of the miseries of man. I hope and believe that there is a state of existence beyond the grave, where the worthy of this life will renew their former intimacies, with this endearing addition, that 'we meet to part no more.' . . .

Tell us, ye dead:
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret
What 'tis you are and we must shortly be?*

A thousand times have I made this apostrophe to the departed sons of men but not one of them has ever thought fit to answer the question. 'O that some courteous ghost would blab it out!'†—but it cannot be: you and I, my friend, must make the experiment by ourselves and for ourselves. However, I am so convinced that an unshaken faith in the doctrines of religion is not only necessary by making us better men, but also by making us happier men, that I shall take every care that your little godson and every little creature that shall call me father shall be taught them.

So ends this heterogeneous letter, written at this wild place of the world, in the intervals of my labor of discharging a vessel of rum from Antigua. R. B.

TO MR ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM,

SOME LITTLE TIME AFTER HIS MARRIAGE; AND AFTER, THROUGH HIS RECOMMENDATION, THAT I HAD BEEN PRESENTED WITH A DIPLOMA FROM THE EDINBURGH COMPANY OF ROYAL ARCHERS.‡

DUMFRIES, 10*th September* 1792.

No! I will not attempt an apology. Amid all my hurry of business, grinding the faces of the Publican and Sinner on the merciless wheels of the Excise; making ballads and then singing them to my drink; over and above all, the correcting the Press-work of two different publications;§—still, still I might have stolen five minutes to dedicate to one of the first of my Friends and Fellow-creatures. I might have done, as I do at present, snatched an hour near 'witching time of night' and scrawled a page or two:—I might have congratulated my

* From Blair's *Grave*.

† A continuation of the above quotation. See Vol. II. p. 345.

‡ From the transcript in the Glenriddel volume of letters.

§ Creech to Cadell (of Cadell & Davies, publishers, London), June 13, 1792: 'I enclose a sheet of Burns's *Poems*, now going on, that you may have the plate in readiness. There will be fifty pages of additional poems to this edition.' The other work referred to by Burns was probably the fifth volume of Johnson's *Musical Museum*, which, however, was not published till after his death.

friend on his marriage;* or I might have thanked the Caledonian Archers for the honor they have done me: though, to do myself justice, I intended to have done both in rhyme, else I had done both before now.

Well, then! here is your good health!—for I have set a nipperkin of toddy by me, by way of Spell to keep away the meikle horned Deil or any of his Subaltern Imps who may be on their nightly rounds.

But what shall I write to you?—'The voice said, cry! and I said, what shall I cry?' O thou Spirit! whatever thou art or wherever thou makest thyself visible! Be thou a Bogle by the eerie side of an auld thorn, in the dreary glen through which the herd callan maun bicker in his gloamin route frae the fauld! Be thou a Brownie, set, in the dead of night, to thy task by the blazing ingle or in the solitary barn, where the repercussions of thy iron flail half affright thyself, as thou performest the work of twenty of the sons of men, ere the cock-crowing summon thee to thy ample cog of substantial brose. Be thou a Kelpie, haunting the ford or ferry in the starless night, mixing thy laughing yell with the howling of the storm and the roaring of the flood, as thou viewest the perils and miseries of man on the foundering horse or in the tumbling boat! Or, lastly, be thou a Ghost, paying thy nocturnal visits to the hoary ruins of decayed Grandeur; or performing thy mystic rites in the shadow of the time-worn church, while the moon looks, without a cloud, on the silent, ghastly dwellings of the Dead beside thee; or, taking thy stand by the bedside of the Villain or the Murderer, portraying on their dreaming fancy pictures dreadful as the horrors of unveiled Hell and terrible as the wrath of incensed Deity!—Come! thou Spirit! but not in these horrid forms: come with the milder, gentle, easy inspirations which thou breathest around the wig of a prating Advocate or the *tête* of a tea-drinking gossip, while their tongues run at the light-horse gallop of clishmaclaver for ever and ever—Come, and assist a poor devil who is quite jaded in the attempt to share half an idea among half a hundred words; to fill up four quarto pages, while he has not gotten one single sentence of recollection, information or remark worth recording.

I feel, I feel, the presence of supernatural assistance! Circled in the embrace of my elbow-chair, my breast labors like the bloated Sibyl on her three-footed stool and, like her, too, labors with nonsense. Nonsense! Auspicious Name!!! Tutor, Friend and Finger-post in the mystic mazes of Law; the cadaverous paths of Physic; and particularly in the sightless soarings of School Divinity, who, leaving Common Sense confounded at his strength of pinion, Reason delirious with eyeing his giddy flight; and Truth creeping back into the bottom of her well, cursing the hour in which she offered her scorned alliance to the Wizard Power of Theologic

* '[Married] at Edinburgh (April 13, 1792), Mr Alexander Cunningham, writer, to Miss Agnes Moir, youngest daughter of the late Rev. Henry Moir, minister of the gospel at Auchtertool.'—*Scots Magazine.*

Vision—raves abroad on all the winds, 'On earth, Discord! a gloomy Heaven above, opening her jealous gates to the nineteen-thousandth part of the tithe of mankind! And below, an inescapable and inexorable Hell, expanding its leviathan jaws for the vast residue of mortals!!!'—O Doctrine! comfortable and healing to the weary, wounded soul of man! Ye sons and daughters of Affliction, ye *pauvres Miserables*, to whom day brings no pleasure and night yields no rest, be comforted! 'Tis but one to nineteen hundred thousand that your situation will mend in this world; and 'tis nineteen hundred thousand to one that you will be damned, eternally, in the world to come!

But of all nonsense, religious nonsense is the most nonsensical; so enough, and more than enough, of it. Only, by the bye, will you, or can you, tell me, my dear Cunningham, why a religioso turn of mind* has always a tendency to narrow and illiberalize the heart? They are orderly; they may be just; nay, I have known them merciful; but still your children of super-sanctity move among their fellow-creatures with a nostril-snuffing putrescence and a foot-spurning filth—in short, with that conceited dignity which your titled Douglases, Hamiltons, Gordons, or any other of your Scots Lordlings of seven centuries standing, display, when they accidentally mix among the many aproned sons of Mechanical life. I remember, in my plough-boy days, I could not conceive it possible that a noble Lord could be a Fool or that a Godly man could be a Knave. How ignorant are plough-boys!—Nay, I have since discovered that a *Godly Woman* may be a ———! But hold—this Rum is generous Antigua, so a very unfit menstruum for scandal.

Apropos, how do you like, I mean *really* like, the Married life? Ah, my Friend! Matrimony is quite a different thing from what your lovesick youths and sighing girls take it to be! But marriage, we are told, is appointed by God, and I shall never quarrel with any of His institutions. I am a Husband of older standing than you, and I shall give you *my* ideas of the Conjugal State (*En passant*—you know I am no Latinist—is not *conjugal* derived from *Jugum*, a yoke?)—Well then, the scale of Good wife-ship I divide into ten parts: Good-nature, *four;* Good-Sense, *two;* Wit, *one;* Personal Charms—namely, a sweet face, eloquent eyes, fine limbs, graceful carriage (I would add a fine waist too, but that is so soon spoilt, you know), all these, *one;* as for the other qualities belonging to, or attending on, a wife, such as fortune, connections, education (I mean more than the ordinary run), family blood, &c., divide the *two* remaining degrees among them as you please, only, remember that all these minor properties must be expressed by *fractions*, for there is not any *one* of them, in my aforesaid Scale, entitled to the dignity of an *Integer*.

As for the rest of my fancies and reveries—How I met lately with Miss Lesley Baillie, the most beautiful, elegant woman in the world—How I accompanied her and her Father's family fifteen miles on their

* By 'religioso,' Burns here means 'evangelical.'

road, purely to admire the loveliness of the works of God in such an unequalled display of them—How, as I galloped home at night, I made a Ballad on her, of which the two following Stanzas are a part—

Thou, bonie Lesley, art a Queen,
Thy Subjects we, before thee;
Thou, bonie Lesley, art divine,
The hearts of men adore thee.

The very Deil he could na scaith
Whatever wad belang thee;
He 'd look into thy bonie face
And say 'I canna wrang thee'

—Behold all these things are written in the chronicles of my imagination, and shall be read by thee, my dear Friend, and by thy beloved Spouse, my other dear Friend, at a more convenient season.

Now, to thee and to thy bosom-companion be given the precious things brought forth by the Sun, and the precious things brought forth by the Moon, and the benignest influences of the Stars and the living streams which flow from the fountains of life and by the tree of life for ever and ever! Amen! ROBT. BURNS.

The next letter, written about the same time as that to Cunningham, and in a somewhat similar spirit, shows Burns to have been on a most friendly footing with his official superiors.

TO MR CORBET, SUPERVISOR-GENERAL OF EXCISE.

[DUMFRIES, *Sep.* 1792.]

SIR—When I was honored with your most obliging letter, I said to myself 'A simple letter of thanks will be a very poor return for so much kindness. I shall likewise send the gentleman a cargo of my best and newest rhymes.' However, my new division holds me so very busy, and several things in it being rather new to me, my time has hitherto been totally engrossed. When a man is strongly impressed with a sense of something he ought to do, at the same time that want of leisure, or want of opportunity, or want of assistance, or want of information, or want of paper, pen and ink, or any other of the many wants which flesh is heir to—when sense of duty pulls one way and necessity (or alas! too often indolence under necessity's garb) pulls another—you are too well acquainted with poor human nature to be told what a devil of a life that arch-vixen Conscience leads us.

Old as I am in acquaintance, and growing grey in connexion, with slips, frips, failings, frailties, backslidings in the paths of grace and all other light-horse militia of iniquity, never did my poor back suffer such scarification from the scourge of Conscience as during these three weeks that your kind epistle has lain by me unanswered. A negro wench under the rod of a West India mistress, a nurse under the caprices of a spoilt child, the only son and heir of a booby squire; nay, a hen-pecked husband under the displeasure of his virago wife, were enviable predicaments to mine. At last, by way of compromise, I return you by this my most grateful thanks for all the generous friendship and disinterested patronage for which now and formerly I have the honor to be indebted to you, and as to my rhymes—another edition, in two volumes, of my poems being in the press—I shall beg leave to present a copy to Mrs Corbet as my first, and I will venture to add, most effectual, mediator with you on my behalf. I have the honour to be, &c., R. B.

Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum* was originally an engraver's undertaking. Burns helped to make it a rich repository of Scottish song and music, and increased its value immeasurably by his own original contributions. Stephen Clarke, the organist, harmonised the airs. The *Museum* was, however, a somewhat plain and unattractive work, and left much to be desired in respect of purity of taste. It is not surprising, therefore, that about this time some musical amateurs in Edinburgh should have united to form a collection of Scottish songs, in a much handsomer form, under more rigid editorial care, and with symphonies and accompaniments by the first musicians on the Continent. The leading spirit in the concern was George Thomson,* clerk to the Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Manufactures in Scotland. Another of the amateurs was the Honourable Andrew Erskine, brother of the musical Earl of Kellie,† a well-known wit and versifier. The projectors resolved to apply to Burns for aid, and Thomson accordingly wrote to him.

* George Thomson was the son of Robert Thomson, schoolmaster at Limekilns, in the parish of Dunfermline. Born March 4, 1757, he was educated chiefly in Banff, where his father was engaged in teaching, before settling in Edinburgh as messenger-at-arms. He was trained to be a lawyer's clerk, and in 1780, on the recommendation of John Home, the author of *Douglas*, was appointed junior clerk to the Board of Trustees in Edinburgh. He subsequently succeeded to the principal clerkship. He died at Leith on the 18th February 1851, at the age of ninety-four. One of his granddaughters, Catherine Thomson Hogarth, became the wife of Charles Dickens, the novelist.

† See note, Vol. III., p. 32.

GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, *September* 1792.

SIR—For some years past I have, with a friend or two, employed many leisure hours in collating and collecting the most favourite of our national melodies, for publication. We have engaged Pleyel, the most agreeable composer living, to put accompaniments to these and also to compose an instrumental prelude and conclusion to each air, the better to fit them for concerts both public and private. To render this work perfect, we are desirous to have the poetry improved wherever it seems unworthy of the music; and that it is so, in many instances, is allowed by every one conversant with our musical collections. The editors of these seem in general to have depended on the music proving an excuse for the verses; and hence some charming melodies are united to mere nonsense and doggerel, while others are accommodated with rhymes so loose and indelicate as cannot be sung in decent company. To remove this reproach would be an easy task to the author of 'The Cotter's Saturday Night;' and, for the honour of Caledonia, I would fain hope he may be induced to take up the pen; if so, we shall be enabled to present the public with a collection infinitely more interesting than any that has yet appeared and acceptable to all persons of taste, whether they wish for correct melodies, delicate accompaniments or characteristic verses.

We shall esteem your poetical assistance a particular favour, besides paying any reasonable price you shall please to demand for it. Profit is quite a secondary consideration with us; and we are resolved to spare neither pains nor expense on the publication. Tell me frankly, then, whether you will devote your leisure to writing twenty or twenty-five songs, suitable to the particular melodies which I am prepared to send you. A few Songs exceptionable only in some of their verses, I will likewise submit to your consideration; leaving it to you, either to mend these or make new Songs in their stead. It is superfluous to assure you that I have no intention to displace any of the sterling old Songs: those only will be removed which appear quite silly or absolutely indecent. Even these shall all be examined by Mr Burns, and if *he* is of opinion that any of them are deserving of the music, in such cases no divorce shall take place.

Relying on the letter * accompanying this, to be forgiven for the liberty I have taken in addressing you, I am, with great esteem, Sir, your most obedient humble servant, G. THOMSON.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, 16*th Sep.* 1792.

SIR—I have just this moment got your letter. As the request you make will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have,

* The letter referred to was an introduction to Burns from Alexander Cunningham.

strained to their utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm. Only, don't hurry me: 'Deil tak the hindmost' is by no means the *Crie de guerre* of my muse. Will you, as I am inferior to none of you in enthusiastic attachment to the poetry and music of old Caledonia and, since you request it, have cheerfully promised my mite of assistance—will you let me have a list of your airs, with the first line of the verses you intend for them, that I may have an opportunity of suggesting any alteration that may occur to me—you know 'tis in the way of my trade—still leaving you, Gentlemen, the undoubted right of publishers to approve or reject, at your pleasure, in your own publication. I say the *first line* of the verses, because if they are verses that have appeared in any of our collections of songs, I know them and can have recourse to them. Apropos, if you are for English verses, there is on my part an end of the matter. Whether in the simplicity of the Ballad or the pathos of the Song, I can only hope to please myself in being allowed at least a sprinkling of our native tongue. English verses, particularly the works of Scotsmen, that have merit, are certainly very eligible. 'Tweedside,' 'Ah! the poor Shepherd's mournful fate!' 'Ah, Chloris, could I sit,' &c., except (excuse my vanity) you should, to 'Gilderoy,' prefer my own song, 'From thee, Eliza, I must go,'—all these you cannot mend; but such insipid stuff as 'To Fanny fair could I impart,' &c., usually set to 'The Mill, Mill O,' 'tis a disgrace to the collections in which it has already appeared and would doubly disgrace a collection that will have the very superior merit of yours. But, more of this in the further prosecution of the business, if I 'm to be called on for my strictures and amendments—I say, amendments; for I will not *alter* except where I myself at least think that I *amend*.

As to remuneration, you may think my songs either *above* or *below* price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, &c., would be downright sodomy of soul! A proof of each of the songs that I compose or amend, I shall receive as a favor. In the rustic phrase of the season, 'God speed the wark!' I am, Sir, your very humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

P.S.—I have some particular reasons for wishing my interference to be known as little as possible. R. B.

Meanwhile, Johnson had, in August, published the fourth volume of his *Scots Musical Museum*, containing a number of songs either written or recast by Burns. The Preface also was the Poet's work.

PREFACE TO VOLUME IV. OF JOHNSON'S 'SCOTS MUSICAL MUSEUM.'

When the Editor Published the third Volume of this work, he had reason to conclude that one volume more would finish the Publication.

Still, however, he has a considerable number of Scots Airs and Songs more than his plan allowed him to include in this fourth volume. These, though in all probability they will not amount to what he has hitherto published as one volume, he shall yet give to the world, that the *Scots Musical Museum* may be a Collection of every Scots Song extant. To those who object that his Publication contains pieces of inferior, or little, value, the Editor answers by referring to his plan. All our Songs cannot have equal merit. Besides, as the world have not yet agreed on any unerring balance, any undisputed standard, in matters of Taste, what to one person yields no manner of pleasure may to another be a high enjoyment.

EDINBURGH, *August* 13, 1792.

The important songs which have not already been inserted in connection with particular dates and circumstances are here presented:

CRAIGIEBURN WOOD.

[FIRST VERSION.]

Sweet closes the evening on Craigieburn wood,
And blythely awaukens the morrow;
But the pride of the spring in the Craigieburn wood
Can yield me nothing but sorrow.

Chorus—Beyond thee, dearie, beyond thee, dearie, Beyond = Beside
And O! to be lying beyond thee,
O sweetly, soundly, weel may he sleep
That 's laid in the bed beyond thee!

I see the spreading leaves and flowers,
I hear the wild birds singing;
But pleasure they hae nane for me,
While care my heart is wringing.

I can na tell, I maun na tell, must
I daur na for your anger;
But secret love will break my heart,
If I conceal it langer.

I see thee gracefu', straight and tall,
I see thee sweet and bonie;
But Oh, what will my torments be,
If thou refuse thy Johnie!

To see thee in another's arms,
In love to lie and languish,
'Twad be my dead, that will be seen, death
My heart wad brust wi' anguish.

But Jeanie, say thou wilt be mine,
Say thou loes nane before me;
And a' my days o' life to come
I'll gratefully adore thee.

This song, he himself tells us,* was meant to present the passion which a Mr Gillespie, a particular friend of his, had for a girl named Lorimer, whose birthplace, as has already been noted, was at Craigieburn Wood, near Moffat. As Jean Lorimer was born in 1775, she must have been only sixteen at most when wooed vicariously in these impassioned stanzas. It was not her destiny to become Mrs Gillespie; but it was reserved for her to be the subject of many other lays by Burns. Burns afterwards altered and pruned the song 'Craigieburn Wood' to the following more correct, but also tamer form:

CRAIGIEBURN WOOD.

[SECOND VERSION.]

Sweet fa's the eve on Craigieburn,
And blythe awakes the morrow;
But a' the pride o' Spring's return
Can yield me nocht but sorrow. nought

I see the flowers and spreading trees,
I hear the wild birds singing;
But what a weary wight can please,
And Care his bosom wringing!

* 'This song was composed on a passion which a Mr Gillespie, a particular friend of mine, had for a Miss Lorimer, afterwards Mrs Whelpdale. The young lady was born at Craigieburn wood. The chorus is part of an old foolish ballad.'—*R. B. in Glenriddel Notes.*

Fain, fain would I my griefs impart,
Yet dare na for your anger;
But secret love will break my heart
If I conceal it langer.

If thou refuse to pity me,
If thou shalt love another,
When yon green leaves fade frae the tree,
Around my grave they 'll wither.

FRAE THE FRIENDS AND LAND I LOVE.

AIR—*Carron Side.*

Frae the friends and Land I love,
Driv'n by Fortune's felly spite;
Frae my best Belov'd I rove,
Never mair to taste delight: more
Never mair maun hope to find must
Ease frae toil, relief frae care;
When Remembrance wracks the mind,
Pleasures but unvail despair.

Brightest climes shall mirk appear, dark
Desert ilka blooming shore, every
Till the Fates, nae mair severe,
Friendship, Love and Peace restore.
Till Revenge, wi' laurell'd head,
Bring our Banished hame again;
And ilk loyal, bonie lad each
Cross the seas and win his ain. recover—own

['Burns says of this song in his *Glenriddel Notes:* "I added the last four lines by way of giving a turn to the theme of the poem, such as it is." The whole song, however, is in his own handwriting, and I have reason to believe it is all his own.'—*Stenhouse.*]

O MEIKLE THINKS MY LUVE O' MY BEAUTY.

TUNE—*My Tocher's the Jewel.*

O meikle thinks my Luve o' my beauty, much
And meikle thinks my Luve o' my kin;
But little thinks my Luve, I ken brawlie know well
My tocher's the jewel has charms for him. dowry
It's a' for the apple he'll nourish the tree,
It's a' for the hiney he'll cherish the bee,
My laddie's sae meikle in love wi' the siller, money
He canna hae luve to spare for me.

Your proffer o' luve's an airle-penny, earnest money
My tocher's the bargain ye wad buy;
But an ye be crafty, I am cunnin, if
Sae ye wi' anither your fortune may try.
Ye're like to the timmer o' yon rotten wood,
Ye're like to the bark o' yon rotten tree,
Ye'll slip frae me like a knotless thread,
And ye'll crack your credit wi' mae nor me. more than

[Although this song is ascribed to Burns in the *Museum*, the fifth and sixth lines of the first stanza and the four closing lines are old.]

WHAT CAN A YOUNG LASSIE DO WI' AN AULD MAN.

TUNE—*What can a Young Lassie do wi' an Auld Man.*

What can a young lassie, what shall a young lassie,
What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man?
Bad luck on the penny that tempted my minnie mother
To sell her poor Jenny for siller an' lan'! money
Bad luck on the penny that tempted my minnie
To sell her poor Jenny for siller an' lan'!

He 's always compleenin frae mornin to e'enin,
He hoasts and he hirples the weary day lang; coughs—limps
He 's doylt and he 's dozin, his blude it is frozen,— worn-out—dull-witted
O dreary 's the night wi' a crazy auld man!
He 's doylt and he 's dozin, his blude it is frozen,—
O dreary 's the night wi' a crazy auld man!

He hums and he hankers, he frets and he cankers,*
I never can please him, do a' that I can;
He 's peevish, and jealous o' a' the young fellows,—
O, dool on the day I met wi' an auld man! woe
He 's peevish and jealous o' a' the young fellows,—
O, dool on the day I met wi' an auld man!

My auld auntie Katie upon me taks pity,
I 'll do my endeavour to follow her plan;
I 'll cross him and wrack him until I heart-break him,
And then his auld brass will buy me a new pan.
I 'll cross him and wrack him until I heart-break him,
And then his auld brass will buy me a new pan.†

[Below the MS., which is in the British Museum, the author has noted the following directions to Johnson: 'Dr Blacklock's set of the tune is bad; I here enclose a better. You may put Dr B.'s song after these verses or you may leave it out, as you please. It has some merit; it is miserably long.']

HOW CAN I BE BLYTHE AND GLAD?

TUNE—*The Bonny Lad that 's far awa.*

O how can I be blythe and glad,
Or how can I gang brisk and braw, well-clad
When the bonie lad that I loe best
Is o'er the hills and far awa!

It 's no the frosty winter wind,
It 's no the driving drift and snaw;
But ay the tear comes in my e'e,
To think on him that 's far awa.

* He is sullen and restless, fretful and peevish.
† This phrase is borrowed from the old song 'Auld Rob Morris.'

My father pat me frae his door,
  My friends they hae disown'd me a';
But I hae ane will tak my part,
  The bonie lad that 's far awa.

A pair o' glooves he bought to me,
  And silken snoods he gae me twa; hair-ribbons
And I will wear them for his sake,
  The bonie lad that 's far awa.

O weary winter soon will pass
  And spring will cleed the birken shaw;* clothe
And my young babie will be born,
  And he 'll be hame that 's far awa.

['He took the first line, and even some hints of his verses, from an old song in Herd's collection, which begins: "How can I be blithe or glad, or in my mind contented be?" '—*Stenhouse.* The song at once suggests Jean Armour's treatment by her family.]

I DO CONFESS THOU ART SAE FAIR.

I do confess thou art sae fair
  I wad been o'er the lugs in luve— ears
Had I na found the slightest prayer
  That lips could speak thy heart could muve.
I do confess thee sweet, but find
  Thou art sae thriftless o' thy sweets—
Thy favours are the silly wind
  That kisses ilka thing it meets. every

See yonder rosebud, rich in dew,
  Amang its native briers sae coy,
How sune it tines its scent and hue soon—loses
  When pu'd and worn a common toy! pulled
Sic fate ere lang shall thee betide: Such
  Tho' thou may gayly bloom a while,
Yet sune thou shalt be thrown aside
  Like ony common weed and vile.

* 'Birken shaw'= A piece of land at the foot of a hill, and covered with birches.

[Altered into Scots by Burns, from an English poem by Sir Robert Aytoun, private secretary to Mary and Anne, Queens of Scotland. 'I do think I have improved the simplicity of the sentiments by giving them a Scots dress. R. B.'

Sir Robert's verses are as follow:

I do confess thou 'rt sweet; yet find
Thee such an unthrift of thy sweets,
Thy favours are but like the wind
That kisseth everything it meets;
And since thou canst with more than one,
Thou 'rt worthy to be kissed by none.

The morning rose that untouched stands
Armed with her briers, how sweetly smells!
But plucked and strained through ruder hands,
Her scent no longer with her dwells:
But scent and beauty both are gone
And leaves fall from her, one by one.

Such fate, ere long, will thee betide,
When thou hast handled been a while;
Like sun-flowers to be thrown aside,
And I shall sigh while some will smile:
So see thy love for more than one
Has brought thee to be loved by none.]

YON WILD MOSSY MOUNTAINS.

TUNE—*Yon Wild Mossy Mountains.*

['This tune is by Oswald: the song alludes to a part of my private history which it is of no consequence to the world to know.'—*Burns in Glenriddel Notes.* Highland Mary has been claimed as the heroine of this song. But it may refer to one of Burns's mysterious excursions to Lanarkshire in 1787.]

Yon wild, mossy mountains sae lofty and wide
That nurse in their bosom the youth o' the Clyde,
Where the grouse lead their coveys thro' the heather to feed,
And the shepherd tents his flock as he pipes on his reed: watches

Not Gowrie's rich valley nor Forth's sunny shores
To me hae the charms o' yon wild, mossy moors;
For there, by a lanely, sequesterèd stream,
Resides a sweet Lassie, my thought and my dream.

Amang thae wild mountains shall still be my path, those
Ilk stream foaming down its ain green, narrow strath, Every—valley
For there, wi' my Lassie, the day-lang I rove,
While o'er us, unheeded, flie the swift hours o' Love.

She is not the fairest, altho' she is fair;
O' nice education but sma' is her share;
Her parentage humble as humble can be;
But I loe the dear Lassie because she loes me.

To Beauty what man but maun yield him a prize, must
In her armour of glances, and blushes, and sighs;
And when Wit and Refinement hae polish'd her darts,
They dazzle our e'en as they flie to our hearts.

But Kindness, sweet Kindness, in the fond-sparkling e'e
Has lustre outshining the diamond to me;
And the heart beating love as I'm clasp'd in her arms,
O, these are my Lassie's all-conquering charms.

O FOR ANE AN' TWENTY, TAM.

TUNE—*The Moudiewort.*

['The subject of this song had a real origin: a young girl having been left some property by a near relation, and at her own disposal on her attaining majority, was pressed by her relations to marry an old rich booby. Her affections, however, had previously been engaged by a young man, to whom she had pledged her troth when she should become of age, and she of course obstinately rejected the solicitations of her friends to any other match. Burns represents the lady addressing her youthful lover in the language of constancy and affection.'—*Stenhouse.*]

They snool me sair and haud me down, snub—hold
And gar me look like bluntie, Tam; make—a stupid
But three short years will soon wheel roun',
And then comes ane and twenty, Tam.

Chorus—An' O, for ane and twenty, Tam!
And hey, sweet ane and twenty, Tam!
I'll learn my kin a rattlin sang
An I saw ane and twenty, Tam. If = once

A gleib o' lan', a claut o' gear, piece—hoard—wealth
Was left me by my Auntie, Tam;
At kith or kin I need na spier ask
An I saw ane and twenty, Tam.

They 'll hae me wed a wealthy coof, fool
Tho' I mysel hae plenty, Tam;
But, hearst thou, laddie! there 's my loof: palm (of the hand)
I 'm thine at ane and twenty, Tam.

BESSY AND HER SPINNIN-WHEEL.

TUNE—*The Sweet Lass that Loes me.*

O Leeze me on my spinning-wheel, Dear to me is
And leeze me on my rock and reel; distaff
Frae tap to tae that cleeds me bien, clothes—comfortably
And haps me fiel and warm at e'en! wraps—cosy
I 'll set me down and sing and spin,
While laigh descends the simmer sun, low
Blest wi' content and milk and meal,
O leeze me on my spinnin-wheel!

On ilka hand the burnies trot every—brooks
And meet below my theekit cot; thatched
The scented birk and hawthorn white
Across the pool their arms unite,
Alike to screen the birdie's nest
And little fishes caller rest: cool
The sun blinks kindly in the biel shelter, shed
Where blythe I turn my spinnin-wheel.

On lofty aiks the cushats wail, oaks—wood-pigeons
And Echo cons the doolfu' tale; woeful
The lintwhites in the hazel braes, linnets—banks
Delighted, rival ither's lays;

The craik amang the claver hay, corncrake—clover
The paitrick whirrin o'er the ley, partridge fluttering —grass land
The swallow jinkin round my shiel, flitting—cottage
Amuse me at my spinnin-wheel.

Wi' sma' to sell and less to buy,
Aboon distress, below envy, Above
O wha wad leave this humble state
For a' the pride of a' the great?
Amid their flairing, idle toys,
Amid their cumbrous, dinsome joys, noisy
Can they the peace and pleasure feel
Of Bessy at her spinnin-wheel?

NITHSDALE'S WELCOME HAME.

[Written when Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable, the descendant of the forfeited Earl of Nithsdale, returned to Scotland and rebuilt Terregles House, in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. Mrs Burns in her memoranda states that her husband, when at Ellisland, dined there once or twice. Captain Riddel of Glenriddel furnished the air to which Burns composed the verses.]

The noble Maxwells and their powers
Are coming o'er the border,
And they 'll gae big Terregles towers build
And set them a' in order.
And they declare, Terregles fair
For their abode they chuse it:
There 's no a heart in a' the land
But 's lighter at the news o 't.

Tho' stars in skies may disappear
And angry tempests gather,
The happy hour may soon be near
That brings us pleasant weather:
The weary night o' care and grief
May hae a joyfu' morrow;
So dawning day has brought relief,
Fareweel our night of sorrow.

THE COUNTRY LASS.

TUNE—*The Country Lass.*

In simmer, when the hay was mawn
  And corn wav'd green in ilka field, — every
While claver blooms white o'er the lea — clover—grass land
  And roses blaw in ilka bield! — sheltered spot
Blythe Bessie, in the milking shiel, — hut
  Says—'I 'll be wed come o 't what will;'
Out spak a dame in wrinkled eild— — old age
  'O' gude advisement comes nae ill.

'It 's ye hae wooers mony ane,
  And lassie, ye 're but young, ye ken; — know
Then wait a wee, and cannie wale — a short time—cautious choose
  A routhie* butt, a routhie ben:
There 's Johnie o' the Buskie-glen,
  Fu' is his barn, fu' is his byre;
Tak this frae me, my bonie hen,
  It 's plenty beets the luver's fire.' — fans

'For Johnie o' the Buskie-glen
  I dinna care a single flie;
He lo'es sae weel his craps and kye, — cattle
  He has nae loove to spare for me:
But blythe 's the blink o' Robie's e'e, — glance
  And weel I wat he lo'es me dear; — know
Ae blink o' him I wad na gie
  For Buskie-glen and a' his gear.' — wealth

'O thoughtless lassie, life 's a faught: — fight, struggle
  The canniest gate the strife is sair; — most prudent way—severe
But ay fu-han't is fechtin best:†
  A hungry care 's an unco care. — heavy

* 'Routhie' = well-filled, comfortable. 'Butt and ben,' the two rooms of a cottage.
† It is best to fight with a full hand.

C. Martin Hardie, R.S.A.

Blythe Bessie, in the milking shiel.

But some will spend and some will spare,
And wilfu' folk maun hae their will;
Syne as ye brew, my maiden fair, Accordingly
Keep mind that ye maun drink the yill.' ale

'O gear will buy me rigs o' land money
And gear will buy me sheep and kye;
But the tender heart o' leesome loove gladsome
The gowd and siller canna buy:
We may be poor, Robie and I,
Light is the burden Loove lays on;
Content and Loove brings peace and joy—
What mair hae Queens upon a throne?'

FAIR ELIZA.

[Burns composed this song to a Highland air which he found in Macdonald's collection. In the original manuscript, the name of the heroine is Rabina, which he is understood to have afterwards changed to Eliza, for reasons of taste. Stenhouse states that the verses were designed to embody the passion of a Mr Hunter, a friend of the poet, towards a Rabina of real life, who, it would appear, was loved in vain, for the lover went to the West Indies, and died there soon after his arrival.]

Turn again, thou fair Eliza!
Ae kind blink before we part; glance
Rew on thy despairing Lover: Repent thy coldness to
Canst thou break his faithfu' heart?
Turn again, thou fair Eliza!
If to love thy heart denies,
For pity hide the cruel sentence
Under friendship's kind disguise!

Thee, sweet maid, hae I offended?
My offence is loving thee:
Canst thou wreck his peace for ever
Wha for thine wad gladly die?*

* The similarity of these two lines to the familiar ones in 'Mary Morrison' will at once strike the reader.

While the life beats in my bosom,
  Thou shalt mix in ilka throe : every
Turn again, thou lovely maiden,
  Ae sweet smile on me bestow.

Not the bee upon the blossom
  In the pride o' sinny noon ; sunny
Not the little sporting fairy
  All beneath the simmer moon ;
Not the Poet, in the moment
  Fancy lightens in his e'e,
Kens the pleasure, feels the rapture,
  That thy presence gies to me.

O LUVE WILL VENTURE IN.

TUNE—*The Posie.*

O luve will venture in where it daur na weel be seen,
O luve will venture in where wisdom ance hath been ;
But I will down yon river rove, amang the wood sae green,
  And a' to pu' a posie to my ain dear May. all to pull

The primrose I will pu', the firstling o' the year,
And I will pu' the pink, the emblem o' my Dear ;
For she 's the pink o' womankind, and blooms without a peer :
  And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

I 'll pu' the budding rose when Phebus peeps in view,
For it 's like a baumy kiss o' her sweet, bonie mou ; balmy—mouth
The hyacinth for constancy wi' its unchanging blue :
  And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

The lily it is pure and the lily it is fair,
And in her lovely bosom I 'll place the lily there ;
The daisy 's for simplicity and unaffected air :
  And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

The hawthorn I will pu', wi' its locks o' siller gray, silver
Where like an aged man it stands at break o' day,
But the songster's nest within the bush I winna tak away : will not
And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

The woodbine I will pu' when the e'ening star is near,
And the diamond draps o' dew shall be her een sae clear ;
The violet's for modesty, which weel she fa's to wear : *
And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

I 'll tie the posie round wi' the silken band o' luve,
And I 'll place it in her breast, and I 'll swear by a' abuve,
That to my latest draught o' life the band shall ne'er remuve :
And this will be a posie to my ain dear May.

[In his *Glenriddel Notes*, Burns says he took down the air and the old words of this song from the singing of a country girl. He subsequently explained to Thomson that this 'country girl' was his wife.]

THE BANKS O' DOON.

[FIRST VERSION.]

Sweet are the banks—the banks o' Doon,
The spreading flowers are fair,
And everything is blythe and glad,
But I am fu' o' care. full of
Thou 'll break my heart, thou bonie bird
That sings upon the bough ;
Thou minds me o' the happy days
When my fause Luve was true : false
Thou 'll break my heart thou bonie bird,
That sings beside thy mate ;
For sae I sat, and sae I sang,
And wist na o' my fate.

* Which she rightly has, as her lot, to wear ; which she has a good right to wear.

Aft hae I rov'd by bonie Doon,
To see the woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its Luve, every
And sae did I o' mine;
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
Upon its thorny tree;
But my fause Luver staw my rose, stole
And left the thorn wi' me:
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose cheerful
Upon a morn in June;
And sae I flourished on the morn,
And sae was pu'd or' noon. pulled ere

THE BANKS O' DOON.

[SECOND VERSION.]

Ye flowery banks o' bonie Doon,
How can ye blume sae fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae fu' o' care!
Thou 'll break my heart, thou bonie bird,
That sings upon the bough;
Thou minds me o' the happy days
When my fause Luve was true.
Thou 'll break my heart, thou bonie bird,
That sings beside thy mate;
For sae I sat and sae I sang
And wist na o' my fate.

Aft hae I rov'd by bonie Doon,
To see the woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its Luve,
And sae did I o' mine.
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Upon a morn in June;
How like that rose my blooming morn,
Sae darkly set ere noon!

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
Upon its thorny tree;
But my fause Luver staw my rose
And left the thorn wi' me.

THE BANKS O' DOON.

[THIRD VERSION.]

TUNE—*Caledonian Hunt's Delight.*

Ye Banks and braes o' bonie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair!
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary fu' o' care!
Thou 'll break my heart, thou warbling bird
That wantons thro' the flowering thorn:
Thou minds me o' departed joys,
Departed, never to return.

Aft hae I rov'd by bonie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its luve, every
And fondly sae did I o' mine;
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree;
And my fause luver staw my rose, false
But, ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

Allan Cunningham writes of this, perhaps the most popular of all Burns's songs: 'An Ayrshire legend says the heroine of this affecting song was Miss Peggy Kennedy of Daljarrock, a young creature, beautiful and accomplished, who fell a victim to her love for M'Doual of Logan.'* Writing of the first version, however, to Alexander Cunningham, on 11th March 1791, Burns says expressly, 'I have this evening sketched out a song which I have a good mind to send you.' It is not impossible, however, that Burns had Young Peggy's tragical story in his mind when he wrote.

* For the story of Miss Kennedy's misfortunes, see Vol. I., pp. 269, 270.

WILLIE WASTLE.

TUNE—*The Eight Men of Moidart.*

Willie Wastle dwalt on Tweed,
The spot they ca'd it Linkumdoddie;*
Willie was a wabster gude — weaver
Cou'd stown a clue wi' ony bodie; — have stolen
He had a wife was dour and din, — sulky—ill-coloured
O, Tinkler Maidgie was her mither:
Sic a wife as Willie had—
I wad na gie a button for her!

She has an e'e, she has but ane,
The cat has twa the very colour;
Five rusty teeth forbye a stump, — besides
A clapper tongue wad deave a miller; — deafen
A whiskin beard about her mou, — mouth
Her nose and chin they threaten ither: — one another
Sic a wife as Willie had—
I wad na gie a button for her!

She 's bow-hough'd, she 's hem-shin'd,† — bandy-legged
Ae limpin leg a hand-breed shorter; — One—hand-breadth
She 's twisted right, she 's twisted left,
To balance fair in ilka quarter: — every
She has a hump upon her breast,
The twin o' that upon her shouther:
Sic a wife as Willie had—
I wad na gie a button for her!

Auld baudrons by the ingle sits, — cat—fireside
An' wi' her loof her face a-washin; — paw
But Willie's wife is nae sae trig: — dainty
She dights her grunzie wi' a hushion;‡ — wipes—mouth

* An imaginary place. It has been averred that Willie was in reality a farmer near Ellisland, with an unattractive wife. 'Cunningham says the name of Willie Wastle's wife is lost; I could tell him who she was, but there is no use in opening old sores.'—*Extract from a letter of Mrs Renwick (Jane Jaffray) to her sister*, Nov. 13, 1838.

† With shins of shape of hems, or hames, two hinged pieces of iron or wood of a horse's collar to which the traces are fastened.

‡ Footless stocking worn on the arm.

Her walie nieves like midden-creels, huge fists—manure
Her face wad fyle the Logan Water: panniers pollute
Sic a wife as Willie had—
I wad na gie a button for her!

BONIE BELL.

The smiling Spring comes in rejoicing,
And surly Winter grimly flies;
Now crystal clear are the falling waters,
And bonny blue are the sunny skies.
Fresh o'er the mountains breaks forth the morning,
The ev'ning gilds the Ocean's swell;
All creatures joy in the sun's returning,
And I rejoice in my Bonie Bell.

The flowery Spring leads sunny Summer,
And yellow Autumn presses near;
Then in his turn comes gloomy Winter,
Till smiling Spring again appear:
Thus seasons dancing, life advancing,
Old Time and Nature their changes tell;
But never ranging, still unchanging,
I adore my Bonie Bell.*

THE GALLANT WEAVER.

TUNE—*The Weavers' March.*

Where Cart † rins rowin to the sea, rolling
By mony a flow'r and spreading tree,
There lives a lad, the lad for me,
He is a gallant Weaver.
Oh, I had wooers aught or nine, eight
They gied me rings and ribbons fine;

* 'Bonie Bell' is one of the few heroines of Burns for whom an original has not been suggested.

† Paisley stands on the river Cart.

And I was fear'd my heart would tine, — be lost
And I gied it to the Weaver. — gave

My daddie sign'd my tocher-band — dowry-bond
To gie the lad that has the land,
But to my heart I 'll add my hand,
And gie it to the Weaver.
While birds rejoice in leafy bowers,
While bees delight in opening flowers,
While corn grows green in simmer showers,
I 'll love my gallant Weaver.*

THE DEUK'S DANG O'ER MY DADDIE.†

The bairns gat out wi' an unco shout, — children—great
'The deuk 's dang o'er my daddie, O!' — duck has knocked down
'The fien-ma-care,' quo' the feirrie auld wife, — devil-ma-care —sturdy
'He was but a paidlin body, O! — dawdling
He paidles out, and he paidles in,
An' he paidles late and early, O!
This seven lang years I hae lien by his side,
An' he is but a fusionless carlie, O.' — pithless—little man

'O haud your tongue, my feirrie auld wife, — hold
O haud your tongue, now Nansie, O;
I 've seen the day, and sae hae ye,
Ye wad na been sae donsie, O. — saucy
I 've seen the day ye butter'd my brose, — put butter in my hasty porridge
And cuddled me late and early, O;
But downa-do 's come o'er me now, — 'am-not-able' = failure of strength
And Oh, I find it sairly, O!'

* This song will at once suggest Jean Armour's visit to Paisley in 1786, and the offer of marriage said to have been made to her by Robert Wilson, the well-to-do weaver.

† Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe supplied from a manuscript in his possession some of the old words which Burns modified. His first four lines are easily traced in

The bairns they a' set up the cry
'The deuk 's dang o'er my daddie, O;'
'There 's no mickle matter,' quo' the gudewife,
'He 's ay been a daidlin body, O.'

SHE'S FAIR AND FAUSE.*

TUNE—*She's Fair and Fause.*

She 's fair and fause that causes my smart, false
  I lo'ed her meikle and lang; much
She 's broken her vow, she 's broken my heart,
  And I may e'en gae hang:
A coof cam in wi' routh o' gear, fool—abundance of goods
  And I hae tint my dearest dear; lost
But woman is but warld's gear,
  Sae let the bonie lass gang. go

Whae'er ye be that woman love,
  To this be never blind:
Nae ferlie 'tis tho' fickle she prove, wonder
  A woman has 't by kind: nature
O woman lovely, woman fair!
  An angel-form 's faun to thy share, fallen
'Twad been o'er meikle to gien thee mair†—
  I mean an angel-mind.‡

* This song was probably suggested to Burns by the love disappointment of his friend Alexander Cunningham, alluded to in his letter of 24th January 1789. Anne Stewart's marriage is recorded thus: '13th January 1789.—At Edinburgh, Mr Forrest Dewar, Surgeon, to Miss Anne Stewart, daughter of John Stewart, Esq. of East Craigs.'

† It would have been too much to have given thee more.

‡ In a song, entitled 'The Address,' which appears in *The Lark* (2 vols. 1765), there is a passage which perhaps suggested the thought in the fourth stanza of the above song—

'Twixt pleasing hope and painful fear
  True love divided lies;
With artless look and soul sincere,
  Above all mean disguise.
For Celia thus my heart has moved,
  Accept it, lovely fair;
I've liked before, but never loved,
  Then let me not despair.

'My fate before your feet I lay,
  Sentence your willing slave;
Remember that though tyrants slay,
  Yet heavenly powers save.
To bless is Heaven's peculiar grace,
  Let me a blessing find;
And since you wear an angel's face,
  O shew an angel's mind!'

Mrs Dunlop had written to Burns about her widowed daughter, Mrs Henri, who had gone to France with her infant expressly to introduce him to his father's family. The dethronement of the king, the proclamation of a republic, and the savage proceedings of the triumphant revolutionists against all persons of rank suspected of royalist leanings had involved the young widow in serious troubles, which were aggravated by the state of her health.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, *24th September* 1792.

I have this moment, my dear Madam, yours of the twenty-third. All your other kind reproaches, your news, &c., are out of my head when I read and think on Mrs Henri's situation. Good God! a heart-wounded helpless young woman—in a strange, foreign land, and that land convulsed with every horror that can harrow the human feelings—sick—looking, longing for a comforter, but finding none—a mother's feelings, too—but it is too much: He who wounded (He only can) may He heal! * * *

I wish the Farmer * great joy of his new acquisition to his family. * * * I cannot say that I give him joy of his life as a farmer. 'Tis, as a farmer paying a dear, unconscionable rent, a *cursed life!* As to a laird farming his own property; sowing his own corn in hope; and reaping it, in spite of brittle weather, in gladness, knowing that none can say unto him 'what dost thou?'—fattening his herds; shearing his flocks; rejoicing at Christmas; and begetting sons and daughters until he be the venerated, grey-haired leader of a little tribe—'tis a heavenly life! but Devil take the life of reaping the fruits that another must eat!

Well, your kind wishes will be gratified as to seeing me when I make my Ayrshire visit. I cannot leave Mrs Burns until her nine months' race is run, which may perhaps be in three or four weeks. She, too, seems determined to make me the patriarchal leader of a band. However, if Heaven will be so obliging as let me have them in the proportion of three boys to one girl, I shall be so much the more pleased. I hope, if I am spared with them, to shew a set of boys that will do honour to my cares and name; but I am not equal to the task of rearing girls. Besides, I am too poor: a girl should always have a fortune. Apropos, your little godson is thriving charmingly, but is a very devil. He, though two years younger, has completely mastered his brother. Robert is indeed the mildest, gentlest creature I ever saw. He has a most surprising memory and is quite the pride of his schoolmaster.

You know how readily we get into prattle upon a subject dear to our heart: you can excuse it. God bless you and yours! R. B.

It so happened, nevertheless, that Mrs Burns gave birth to

* One of Mrs Dunlop's sons.

a girl, born on the 21st November. The child was named Elizabeth Riddel, in compliment to the wife of his friend Robert Riddel of Friars' Carse,* and while she lived was a great favourite with her father. He was often seen of a summer evening at his door with the child in his arms, dandling her, singing to her, and teaching her to take an interest in what was going on around her. It will be seen that the child was not destined to a long life, and that her death occurred at a time when her father was bowed to the earth by other sorrows.

GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 13*th Oct.* 1792.

DEAR SIR—I received with much satisfaction your pleasant and obliging letter, and now return my warmest acknowledgments for the enthusiasm with which you have entered into our undertaking. We have now no doubt of being able to produce a collection highly deserving of public attention in all respects.

I agree with you in thinking English verses that have merit very eligible, wherever new verses are necessary; because the English becomes every year more and more the language of Scotland; but if you mean that no English verses, except those of Scottish authors, ought to be admitted, I am half inclined to differ from you. I should consider it unpardonable to sacrifice one good song in the Scottish dialect to make room for English verses; but if we can select a few excellent ones suited to the unprovided or ill-provided airs, would it not be the very bigotry of literary patriotism to reject such, merely because the authors were born south of the Tweed? Our sweet air 'My Nannie, O,' which, in the collections, is joined to the poorest stuff that Allan Ramsay ever wrote, beginning 'While some for pleasure pawn their health,' answers so finely to Dr Percy's beautiful song 'O Nancy, wilt thou go with me,' that one would think he wrote it on purpose for the air. However, it is not at all our wish to confine you to English verses: you will freely be allowed 'a sprinkling of your native tongue,' as you elegantly express it; and, moreover, we will patiently wait your own time. One thing only I beg, which is, that however gay and sportive the muse may be, she will always be decent. Let her not write what beauty would blush to speak, nor wound that charming delicacy which forms the most precious dowry of our daughters. I do not conceive the song to be the most proper vehicle for witty and brilliant conceits: simplicity, I believe, should be its prominent feature; but in some of our songs, the writers

* According to the local antiquary, Mr Grierson of Dalgoner, Mrs Riddel's maiden name was Elizabeth Kennedy, and she belonged to Manchester. She survived her husband seven years, dying at Bath in 1801. None of her children survived her.

have confounded simplicity with coarseness and vulgarity, although between the one and the other, as Dr Beattie well observes, there is as great a difference as between a plain suit of clothes and a bundle of rags. The humorous ballad or pathetic complaint is best suited to our artless melodies; and more interesting, indeed, in all songs than the most pointed wit, dazzling descriptions and flowery fancies.

With these trite observations, I send you eleven of the songs for which it is my wish to substitute others of your writing. I shall soon transmit the rest and, at the same time, a prospectus of the whole collection; and you may believe we will receive any hints that you are so kind as to give, for improving the work with the greatest pleasure and thankfulness. I remain, dear Sir, &c., G. T.

It is evident from the reference in the following letter to 'Allan' (probably David Allan, the 'Scottish Hogarth,' who was to illustrate Thomson's *Collection*) that a letter from Thomson to Burns is missing here.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, *26th Oct.* 1792.

MY DEAR SIR—Let me tell you that you are too fastidious in your ideas of songs and ballads. I own that your criticisms are just; the songs you specify in your list have, all but one, the faults you remark in them—but who shall mend the matter?—who shall rise up and say 'Go to, I will make a better?' For instance, on reading over 'The Lea-Rig,' I immediately set about trying my hand on it; and after all, I could make nothing more of it than the following, which, Heaven knows, is poor enough :—

THE LEA-RIG.

[FIRST VERSION.]

TUNE—*The Lea-Rig.*

When o'er the hill the eastern star
  Tells bughtin-time * is near, my jo,
And owsen frae the furrow'd field — oxen
  Return sae dowf and weary, O; — slowly
Down by the burn, where scented birks — birches
  Wi' dew are hanging clear, my jo,
I 'll meet thee on the lea-rig, — strip of grass land
  My ain kind dearie, O.

* Time to drive the sheep into the *bughts* or folds.

In mirkest glen, at midnight hour, darkest
I'd rove and ne'er be eerie, O, afraid
If thro' that glen I gaed to thee, went
My ain kind dearie, O;
Altho' the night were ne'er sae wet,*
And I were ne'er sae weary, O,
I'd meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie, O.

Your observation as to the aptitude of Dr Percy's ballad to the air 'Nannie, O' is just. It is, besides, perhaps the most beautiful ballad in the English language. But, let me remark to you, in the sentiment and style of our Scottish airs there is a pastoral simplicity—a something that one may call the Doric style and dialect of vocal music, to which a dash of our native tongue and manners is particularly, nay, peculiarly, apposite. For this reason, and, upon my honor, for this reason alone, I am of opinion—but as I told you before, my opinion is yours, freely yours, to approve or reject as you please—that my ballad of 'Nannie, O' might perhaps do for one set of verses to the tune. Now, don't let it enter your head that you are under any necessity of taking my verses. I have long ago made up my mind as to my own reputation in the business of Authorship; and have nothing to be pleased or offended at in your adoption or rejection of my verses. Tho' you should reject one half of what I give you, I shall be pleased with your adopting t'other half; and shall continue to serve you with the same assiduity.

In the printed copy of 'My Nannie, O' the name of the river is horridly prosaic. I will alter it:

Behind yon hills where { Girvan / Lugar } flows.

'Girvan' is the river that suits the idea of the stanza best; but 'Lugar' is the most agreeable modulation of syllables.

I intended to have given you, and will soon give you, a great many more remarks on this business; but I have just now an opportunity of conveying you this scrawl postage free—an expense that it is ill able to pay;† so with my best compliments to honest Allan, Good-bye to you! R. B.

Friday Night.

Remember me to the first and dearest of my friends, Alex. Cunningham, who, I understand, is a coadjutor with you in this business. R. B.

* This word was subsequently altered by the poet to 'wild'—'evidently a great improvement' says Dr Currie.

† The postage marked on the first letter from Burns to Thomson is 8d.—so modestly did the poet estimate these brilliant contributions to his friend's work.

Saturday Morning.

I find that I have still an hour to spare this morning before my conveyance goes away: I shall give you 'Nannie, O' at length.

Your remarks on 'Ewe-bughts, Marion' are just; still it has obtained a place among our more classic Scots songs; and what with many beauties in its composition and more prejudices in its favor, you will not find it easy to supplant it.

In my very early years, when I was thinking of going to the West Indies, I took the following farewell of a dear girl. It is quite trifling and has nothing of the merits of 'Ewe-bughts;' but it will fill up this page. You must know that all my earlier love-songs were the breathings of ardent passion, and though it might have been easy in after times to have given them a polish, yet that polish, to me whose they were and who perhaps alone cared for them, would have defaced the legend of the heart, which was so faithfully inscribed on them. Their uncouth simplicity was, as they say of wines, their race.

Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore? &c.*

'Galla Water' and 'Auld Rob Morris' I think will most probably be the next subject of my musings. However, even on my verses, speak out your criticisms with equal frankness. My wish is not to stand aloof the uncomplying bigot of opiniátreté, but cordially to join issue with you† in the furtherance of the work. Gude speed the wark! Amen.

R. B.

On his return home after a short absence, the poet found a letter from Mrs Dunlop, informing him of the melancholy death of her daughter, Mrs Henri.‡

TO MRS DUNLOP.

[DUMFRIES, *October* 1792.]

I had been from home and did not receive your letter until my return the other day. What shall I say to comfort you, my much-valued, much-afflicted friend? I can but grieve with you: consolation I have none to offer, except that which religion holds out to the children of affliction—(*children of affliction!* how just the expression!)—and like every other family, they have matters among them which they hear, see and feel in a serious, all-important manner, of which the world has not, nor cares to

* See Vol. I., p. 342. Thomson did not include this song in his work.

† It will be observed that Burns here uses a familiar English law-term in a contrary sense.

‡ 'September 15, [died] at Muges, Aiguillon, Mrs Henry, widow of the late James Henry, Esq.'—*Scots Magazine*, 1792.

have, any idea. The world looks indifferently on, makes the passing remark and proceeds to the next novel occurrence.

Alas, Madam! who would wish for many years! What is it but to drag existence until our joys gradually expire and leave us in a night of misery: like the gloom which blots out the stars, one by one, from the face of night and leaves us without a ray of comfort in the howling waste!

I am interrupted and must leave off. You shall soon hear from me again.

R. B.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, *November* 8, 1792.

If you mean, my dear Sir, that all the songs in your collection shall be poetry of the first merit, I am afraid you will find difficulty in the undertaking, more than you are aware of. There is a peculiar rhythmus in many of our airs, a necessity of adapting syllables to the emphasis, or what I would call the feature-notes, of the tune that cramps the poet and lays him under almost insuperable difficulties. For instance, in the air 'My Wife's a wanton wee thing,' if a few lines, *smooth and pretty*, can be adapted to it, it is all that you can expect. The following I made extempore to it; and though on further study I might give you something more profound, yet it might not suit the light-horse gallop of the air so well as this *random clink*.

MY WIFE'S A WINSOME WEE THING.

I never saw a fairer,
I never lo'ed a dearer,
And neist my heart I 'll wear her, — next
For fear my jewel tine. — be lost

Chorus—She is a winsome wee thing, — agreeable
She is a handsome wee thing,
She is a loesome wee thing,*
This dear wee wife o' mine.

The world's wrack we share o''t, — misfortune
The warstle and the care o''t, — wrestling
Wi' her I 'll blythely bear it,
And think my lot divine.

* Manuscript—'She is a winsome wee thing.' The alteration was by Thomson.

I have just been looking over the 'Collier's Bonie Dochter;' and if the following rhapsody, which I composed the other day on a charming Ayrshire girl, Miss Lesley Baillie of Mayville, as she passed thro' this place to England,* will suit your taste better than the 'Collier Lassie,' fall on and welcome.

O saw ye bonie Lesley
As she gaed o'er the Border? &c.†

Every seventh line ends with three syllables, in place of the two in the other lines; but you will see in the sixth bar of the second part, the place where these three syllables will always recur, that the four semiquavers usually sung as one syllable will, with the greatest propriety, divide into two, thus,

For Na—ture made her what she is, And, &c.

I have hitherto deferred the sublimer, more pathetic, airs, until more leisure, as they will take, and deserve, a greater effort. However, they are all put into thy hands as clay into the hands of the potter, to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor. Farewell.

ROBT. BURNS.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

HIGHLAND MARY.

TUNE—*Katherine Ogie.*

Ye banks and braes and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery!
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie: muddy
There Simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last Fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay, green birk, birch
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasp'd her to my bosom!

* See letters to Mrs Dunlop, 22d August 1792, and Alexander Cunningham, 10th September 1792.

† See *ante*, p. 324.

The golden Hours on angel wings
  Flew o'er me and my Dearie;
For dear to me as light and life
  Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' mony a vow and lock'd embrace,
  Our parting was fu' tender;
And, pledging aft to meet again,
  We tore oursels asunder;
But oh! fell Death's untimely frost,
  That nipt my Flower sae early!
Now green 's the sod and cauld 's the clay
  That wraps my Highland Mary!

O pale, pale now those rosy lips
  I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly!
And clos'd for ay the sparkling glance
  That dwalt on me sae kindly!
And mouldering now in silent dust
  That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
  Shall live my Highland Mary!

My dear Sir,—I agree with you that the song 'K. Ogie' is very poor stuff and unworthy, altogether unworthy, of so beautiful an air. I tried to mend it, but the awkward sound 'Ogie' recurring so often in the rhyme spoils every attempt at introducing *sentiment* into the piece. The foregoing song pleases myself; I think it is in my happiest manner: you will see at first glance that it suits the air. The subject of the song is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days, and I own that I would be much flattered to see the verses set to an air which would ensure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition.

I have partly taken your idea of 'Auld Rob Morris:' I have adopted the first two verses, and am going on with the song on a new plan which promises pretty well. I take one or another, just as the bee of the moment buzzes in my bonnet-lug; and do you, *sans cérémonie*, make what use you choose of the productions. Adieu. Robt. Burns.

Nov. 14th, 1792.

In those days the little theatre at Dumfries was opened almost every winter, under the management of the Mr Sutherland whom Burns befriended while he resided at Ellisland. In his company was a Miss Fontenelle,* a lively little actress, who played 'Little Pickle' in *The Spoiled Child*, and other such characters. Burns admired Miss Fontenelle's performances and wrote poems both for her and about her. The first was entitled:

THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN:

AN OCCASIONAL ADDRESS SPOKEN BY MISS FONTENELLE ON HER BENEFIT-NIGHT. [NOV. 26, 1792.]†

While Europe's eye is fix'd on mighty things:
The fate of empires and the fall of kings;
While quacks of state must each produce his plan;
And even children lisp *The Rights of Man;*
Amid this mighty fuss just let me mention
The Rights of Woman merit some attention.

First, in the sexes' intermix'd connection,
One sacred Right of Woman is *protection:*
The tender flower that lifts its head, elate,
Helpless must fall before the blasts of fate,
Sunk on the earth, defac'd its lovely form,
Unless your shelter ward th' impending storm.

Our second Right—but needless here is caution,
To keep that right inviolate 's the fashion:
Each man of sense has it so full before him,
He 'd die before he 'd wrong it—'tis *decorum:*
There was, indeed, in far less polish'd days,
A time when rough rude man had naughty ways:
Would swagger, swear, get drunk, kick up a riot,
Nay, even thus invade a lady's quiet.

* Miss Fontenelle appeared as early as December 26, 1789, in Edinburgh, when she acted in *A Confederacy.*

† The bill of the night announces *The Country Girl* as the play, and that, thereafter, 'Miss Fontenelle will deliver a new Occasional Address, written by Mr Robert Burns, called "The Rights of Woman."'—*Dumfries Times.*

Now, thank our stars! these Gothic times are fled;
Now, well-bred men—and you are all well-bred—
Most justly think (and we are much the gainers)
Such conduct neither spirit, wit nor manners.*

For Right the third, our last, our best, our dearest,
That right to fluttering female hearts the nearest;
Which even the Rights of Kings, in low prostration,
Most humbly own—'tis dear, dear *admiration!*
In that blest sphere alone we live and move;
There taste that life of life—immortal love.
Smiles, glances, sighs, tears, fits, flirtations, airs,
'Gainst such an host what flinty savage dares—
When awful Beauty joins with all her charms,
Who is so rash as rise in rebel arms?

But truce with kings and truce with constitutions,
With bloody armaments and revolutions;
Let Majesty your first attention summon,
Ah! *ça ira!* THE MAJESTY OF WOMAN!

TO MISS FONTENELLE, DUMFRIES.

MADAM—In such a bad world as ours, those who add to the scanty sum of our pleasures are positively our benefactors. To you, Madam, on our humble Dumfries boards, I have been more indebted for entertainment than ever I was in prouder theatres. Your charms as a woman would ensure applause to the most indifferent actress; and your theatrical talents would secure admiration to the plainest figure. This, Madam, is not the unmeaning or insidious compliment of the frivolous or interested: I pay it from the same honest impulse that the sublime of nature excites my admiration or her beauties give me delight.

Will the foregoing lines be of any service to you on your approaching benefit-night? If they will, I shall be prouder of my muse than ever. They are nearly extempore; I know they have no great merit; but though they shall add but little to the entertainment of the evening, they give me the happiness of an opportunity to declare how much I have the honour to be, madam, your very humble servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

* An ironical allusion to the annual saturnalia of the Caledonian Hunt at Dumfries.

TO MISS FONTENELLE, ON SEEING HER IN A FAVOURITE CHARACTER.

Sweet naïveté of feature,
Simple, wild, enchanting elf,
Not to thee, but thanks to nature,
Thou art acting but thyself.

Wert thou awkward, stiff, affected,
Spurning nature, torturing art;
Loves and graces all rejected,
Then indeed thou 'dst act a part.

R. B.

TO [MISS FONTENELLE.*]

I am thinking to send my 'Address' ['The Rights of Woman'] to some periodical publication, but it has not got your sanction: so pray look over it.

As to the Tuesday's play, let me beg of you, my dear Madam, let me beg of you to give us *The Wonder a Woman keeps a Secret;* to which please add *The Spoiled Child*—you will highly oblige me by so doing.

Ah, what an enviable creature you are! There now, this cursed, gloomy, blue-devil day, you are going to a party of choice spirits—

> To play the shapes
> Of frolic fancy, and incessant form
> Those rapid pictures, that assembled train
> Of fleet ideas, never join'd before,
> Where lively *wit* excites to gay surprise;
> Or folly-painting *humour*, grave himself,
> Calls laughter forth, deep-shaking every nerve.

But as you rejoice with them that do rejoice, do also remember to weep with them that weep, and pity your melancholy friend, R. B.

A lady (possibly Mrs Riddel) had agreed to honour a benefit with her patronage:

* This letter was given by Currie in 1800 as having been written to Mrs Walter Riddel. In that case she must, to judge from the second paragraph, have had some managerial power in the theatre. Of this, however, there is no evidence. Both this paragraph and the next seem to refer to Miss Fontenelle.

TO ———

MADAM—You were so very good as to promise me to honor my friend with your presence on his benefit-night. That night is fixed for Friday first: the play a most interesting one—*The way to keep him.* I have the pleasure to know Mr G. well. His merit as an actor is generally acknowledged. He has genius and worth which would do honor to patronage: he is a poor and modest man; claims which, from their very *silence*, have the more forcible power on the generous heart. Alas, for pity! that from the indolence of those who have the good things of this life in their gift, too often does brazen-fronted importunity snatch that boon, the rightful due of retiring, humble want! Of all the qualities we assign to the author and director of Nature, by far the most enviable is —to be able 'To wipe away all tears from all eyes.' O what insignificant, sordid wretches are they, however chance may have loaded them with wealth, who go to their graves, to their magnificent *mausoleums*, with hardly the consciousness of having made one poor, honest heart happy!

But I crave your pardon, Madam; I came to beg, not to preach.

R. B.

The actor for whom Burns thus pleaded was named Grant, of whom, rather singularly, Dibdin records (*Annals of the Edinburgh Stage*, p. 228) that in 1794 he appeared 'for the first time on any stage.' The poet gave him as a present the masonic apron which he had got from Mr Sharpe of Hoddam.* One can readily understand that Burns sympathised readily with those whom his contemporary Crabbe addressed as

> 'Sad happy race! soon raised and soon depress'd;
> Your lives all pass'd in jeopardy and jest.'

TO MRS RIDDEL.

I will wait on you, my ever-valued friend, but whether in the morning I am not sure. Sunday closes a period of our curst revenue business, and may probably keep me employed with my pen until noon. Fine employment for a poet's pen! There is a species of the human genus that I call *the gin-horse class:* what enviable dogs they are! Round, and round, and round they go—Mundell's ox, that drives his cotton-mill,† is

* Grant, while acting at Whitehaven in 1810, gave the apron to Edwin Holwell Heywood, solicitor there, nephew of the Peter Heywood of celebrity in the affair of the mutiny of the *Bounty*.

† A small cotton-mill had been set up by a Dr Mundell, a friend of Burns, who had retired from service in the navy to live in Dumfries.

their exact prototype—without an idea or wish beyond their circle; fat, sleek, stupid, patient, quiet and contented; while here I sit, altogether Novemberish, a d——— melange of fretfulness and melancholy: not enough of the one to rouse me to passion, nor of the other to repose me in torpor; my soul flouncing and fluttering round her tenement, like a wild finch caught amid the horrors of winter and newly thrust into a cage. Well, I am persuaded that it was of me the Hebrew sage prophesied when he foretold—'And behold, on whatsoever this man doth set his heart, it shall not prosper!' If my resentment is awaked, it is sure to be where it dare not squeak; and if in love, as God forgive me, I sometimes am, impossibility presents an imperious barrier to the proudest bearing of presumption; and poor I dare much sooner peep into the focus of Hell than meet the eye of the Goddess of my soul!

Pray that wisdom and bliss be more frequent visitors of R. B.

The cause of this sudden access of melancholy can be traced with only an approximation to accuracy. It seems to be connected with an incident in Burns's life, the whole truth in connection with which can never be ascertained. In the summer of 1790—so at least the familiar story * goes—Mrs Burns left her husband for several weeks, to visit her father and mother at Mauchline. It was natural for Jean to wish to spend a little time with her own relatives, and to show them her children. But it was an injudicious step for the wife of so passionate and impressionable a man: it tended to break the good domestic habits which he had unquestionably set himself to form. His sister Agnes, who had been at Ellisland from the beginning, superintending the dairy, used to say that 'she never knew him fail to keep good hours at night till the first unlucky absence of her sister-in-law in Ayrshire.' On the other hand, business, politics, and pleasure took Burns a good deal into Dumfries from the time—the autumn of 1789—when he entered on active service as an exciseman. When press of official duty, or any other reason, compelled him to remain over-night in Dumfries, he slept at the Globe Tavern, which, as will subsequently be seen, became his favourite haunt. Sometime in 1790, at all events, he contracted a *liaison* with Helen Anne Park, niece of Mrs Hyslop, landlady of the tavern—the 'Anna' of 'the gowden locks' who inspired 'Yestreen I had a pint o' wine.' Tradition—more probably mischievous

* Apart from the positive statements of the relatives, both of Burns and his wife, there is no evidence that Mrs Burns went to Mauchline at any time in 1790.

slander—in Dumfries affirms that Anne Park was quite as much the sinner as the sinned against in the affair. Allan Cunningham expressly stated that she 'had other pretty ways to render herself agreeable to the customers at the inn than the serving of wine;' and it is rather singular that Mrs Hyslop did not forbid Burns the inn in spite of her niece's 'misfortune.' But whether Anne Park was what was popularly known as a 'lightfoot,' Burns's intrigue with her was a lamentable and absolutely indefensible lapse from that ideal of conjugal fidelity which he had placed before himself when he married Jean Armour; and although—whatever unverified and unverifiable gossip may say to the contrary—it is the only lapse of which there is any record, he bitterly lamented it to the end of his life. Anne Park gave birth to a child in Leith on the 31st March 1791. It was sent for a period to Mossgiel. Ten days later, Jean gave birth to her child William Nicol, and some time after her recovery offered with rare magnanimity* to bring up Anne Park's child with her own. It is altogether uncertain when the child became a member of the Dumfries household. The bulk of the evidence that can now be ascertained points to November 1792 as the date of her removal from Mossgiel. On the other hand, we have the familiar and pathetic story that the child was found by Jean's father in the same cradle with her own boy, and that when he asked in some surprise if she had again had twins, she quietly told him that the second baby was 'a neibour's bairn' she was taking temporary charge of. If this conversation actually took place when Armour was on a visit to his daughter, then Anne Park's child must have been adopted by Jean in the course of 1791. According to Mauchline gossip, Jean took her own and Anne Park's child with her in the summer of 1791 to Mauchline, and it was in her father's house that she so skilfully parried his awkward question. It is absolutely certain—nothing else, indeed, is certain in this connection—that Mrs Burns brought up the little girl to womanhood with an unvarying kindness which was repaid with a daughter's love.†

* 'Oor Robin should hae had twa wives,' Jean is said, according to an Ayrshire story, to have once laughingly remarked to a female friend in Mauchline.

† It seems impossible to discover what became of Anne Park. According to one account she died in giving birth to her child by Burns. According to another, she obtained a situation in Edinburgh or Leith as a domestic servant, married a soldier, and died in giving birth to a child by him. Her daughter, to whom the name of Elizabeth was given, received on arriving at womanhood the half of a sum of £400, raised by Alderman Shaw of London

Yet if the child was brought, in the end of 1792, into his house, it is readily conceivable that it would depress him greatly to be thus constantly confronted with a reminder of his transgression. Nevertheless he carried on his correspondence with Thomson about new songs and old melodies in the midst of all his own distresses and while most men were gazing appalled at the political and social convulsions in France.

GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, *Nov.* 1792.

DEAR SIR—I was just going to write to you, that on meeting with your 'Nannie' I had fallen violently in love with her. I thank you therefore for sending the charming rustic to me in the dress you wish her to appear before the public. She does you great credit and will soon be admitted into the best company.

I regret that your song for 'The Lea Rig' is so short: the air is easy, soon sung and very pleasing; so that if the singer stops at the end of two stanzas, it is a pleasure lost ere it is well possessed.

Although a dash of our native tongue and manners is doubtless peculiarly congenial and appropriate to our melodies, yet I shall be able to present a considerable number of the very flowers of English song, well adapted to those melodies which, in England at least, will be the means of recommending them to still greater attention than they have procured there. But you will observe my plan is that every air shall in the first place have verses wholly by Scottish poets; and that those of English writers shall follow as additional songs for the choice of the singer.

What you say of 'The Ewe Bughts' is just: I admire it and never meant to supplant it. All I requested was that you would try your hand on some of the inferior stanzas, which are apparently no part of the original song; but this I do not urge, because the song is of sufficient length although those inferior stanzas be omitted, as they will be, by the singer of taste. You must not think I expect all the songs to be of superlative merit; that were an unreasonable expectation. I am sensible that no poet can sit down doggedly to pen verses and succeed well at all times.

I am highly pleased with your humorous and amorous rhapsody on 'Bonie Lesley:' it is a thousand times better than 'The Collier's Lassie.' 'The deil he couldna scaith thee,' &c., is an eccentric and happy thought.

for Burns's two illegitimate daughters. Elizabeth Burns—she was known by another name for a short time in the Burns household—married a soldier of the name of Thomson (b. 1784, d. 1869), who ultimately became a handloom weaver, and died at Pollokshaws, Glasgow, in 1873. In 1859 a sum of £260 was raised by subscription for her behoof in Glasgow and neighbourhood. One of her daughters, Maggie, became the second wife of David Wingate (b. 1828, d. 1872), the collier poet, and is still (1896) alive, at the age of sixty-four.

Do you not think, however, that the names of such old heroes as Alexander sound rather queer unless in pompous or more burlesque verse? Instead of the line 'And never made anither,' I would humbly suggest, 'And ne'er made sic anither;' and I would fain have you substitute some other line for 'Return to Caledonie' in the last verse, because I think this alteration of the orthography and of the sound of Caledonia disfigures the word and renders it Hudibrastic.

Of the other song 'My Wife 's a winsome wee thing' I think the first eight lines very good, but I do not admire the other eight, because four of them are a bare repetition of the first verse. I have been trying to spin a stanza, but could make nothing better than the following: do you mend it or, as Yorick did with the love-letter, 'whip it up in your own way.'

O leeze me on my wee thing, commend me to
My bonie blythesome wee thing;
Sae lang 's I hae my wee thing,
I 'll think my lot divine.

Though warld's care we share o 't,
And may see meikle mair o 't, much
Wi' her I 'll blythely bear it,
And ne'er a word repine.

You perceive, my dear Sir, I avail myself of the liberty which you condescend to allow me, by speaking freely what I think. Be assured it is not my disposition to pick out the faults of any poem or picture I see: my first and chief object is to discover and be delighted with the beauties of the piece. If I sit down to examine critically, and at leisure, what perhaps you have written in haste, I may happen to observe careless lines, the reperusal of which might lead you to improve them. The wren will often see what has been overlooked by the eagle. I remain yours faithfully, &c. G. T.

P.S.—Your verses upon 'Highland Mary' are just come to hand: they breathe the genuine spirit of poetry and, like the music, will last for ever. Such verses, united to such an air, with the delicate harmony of Pleyel superadded, might form a treat worthy of being presented to Apollo himself. I have heard the sad story of your Mary: you always seem inspired when you write of her.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, 1*st December* 1792.

Your alterations of my 'Nanie, O' are perfectly right; so are those of 'My Wife 's a Wanton Wee Thing.' Your alteration of the second stanza is a positive improvement. Now, my dear Sir, with the freedom which

characterises our correspondence, I must not, cannot, alter 'Bonie Lesley.' You are right, the word 'Alexander' makes the line a little uncouth, but I think the thought is pretty. Of Alexander, beyond all other heroes, it may be said, in the sublime language of scripture, that 'he went forth conquering and to conquer.'

> For Nature made her *what she is,*
> And never made anither (such person as she is).

This is, in my opinion, more poetical than 'ne'er made sic anither.' However, it is immaterial: make it either way. 'Caledonie,' I agree with you, is not so good a word as could be wished, tho' it is sanctioned, in three or four instances, by Allan Ramsay; but I cannot help it. In short, that species of stanza is the most difficult that I have ever tried.

The 'Lea Rig' is as follows:—

THE LEA-RIG.

[SECOND VERSION.]

TUNE—*The Lea-Rig.*

When o'er the hill the e'ening star *
  Tells bughtin-time † is near, my jo,
And owsen frae the furrow'd field — oxen
  Return sae dowf and weary, O; — dull, spiritless
Down by the burn, where birken buds — birch
  Wi' dew are hangin' clear, my jo
I 'll meet thee on the lea-rig,
  My ain kind Dearie, O.

At midnight hour, in mirkest glen, — darkest
  I 'd rove, and ne'er be eerie, O, — frightened
If thro' that glen I gaed to thee, — went
  My ain kind Dearie, O;
Altho' the night were ne'er sae wild,
  And I were ne'er sae weary, O,
I 'll meet thee on the lea-rig,
  My ain kind Dearie, O.

* The first line of the first version reads 'When o'er the hill the *eastern* star:' although here altered, the first reading was ultimately adopted.

† Time to drive the sheep into the *bughts* or folds.

W. D. M'Kay, R.S.A.

I'll meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie O.

The hunter lo'es the morning sun,
To rouse the mountain deer, my jo;
At noon the fisher seeks the glen
Alang the burn to steer, my jo:
Gie me the hour o' gloamin grey.
It maks my heart sae cheery, O
To meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind Dearie, O.

I am interrupted. Yours, &c. R. B.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

Dec. 4th, 1792.

AULD ROB MORRIS.

There 's Auld Rob Morris that wons in yon glen, dwells
He 's the King o' gude fellows and wale o' auld men; choice
He has gowd in his coffers, he has owsen and kine. gold—oxen
And ae bonie lassie, his darling * and mine.

She 's fresh as the morning, the fairest in May;
She 's sweet as the ev'ning amang the new hay;
As blythe and as artless as the lambs on the lea,
And dear to my heart as the light to my e'e.

But oh! she 's an Heiress (auld Robin 's a laird)
And my daddy has nought but a cot-house and yard; garden
A wooer like me maunna hope to come speed, must not
The wounds I must hide that will soon be my dead. death

The day comes to me, but delight brings me nane;
The night comes to me, but my rest it is gane:
I wander my lane like a night-troubled ghaist, alone
And I sigh as my heart it wad burst in my breast. would

* Variation—'dautie.'

O had she but been of a lower degree,
I then might hae hop'd she wad smil'd upon me!
O how past describing had then been my bliss, describing
As now my distraction nae words can express. would

DUNCAN GRAY.

Duncan Gray cam here to woo,
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't,
On blythe Yule-night when we were fou,
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't.
Maggie coost her head fu' high, cast
Look'd asklent and unco skeigh, askance—very coy
Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh, Made—aloof
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't.

Duncan fleech'd and Duncan pray'd, besought
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't;
Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig,
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't:
Duncan sigh'd baith out and in,
Grat his e'en baith bleer't an' blin', Wept—bleared
Spak o' lowpin' o'er a linn, Spoke—jumping—waterfall
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't.

Time and Chance are but a tide,
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't:
Slighted love is sair to bide, hard—endure
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't:
'Shall I, like a fool,' quoth he,
'For a haughty hizzie die? hussy
She may gae to—France for me!'
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't.

How it comes let doctors tell,
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't;
Meg grew sick as he grew hale, sound, healthy
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't.

Something in her bosom wrings,
For relief a sigh she brings:
And oh! her een they spak sic things! eyes—spoke such
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't.

Duncan was a lad o' grace,
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't:
Maggie's was a piteous case,
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't:
Duncan could na be her death,
Swelling pity smoor'd his wrath: smothered
Now they 're crouse and canty baith, cheerful—happy
Ha, ha, the wooing o' 't.

The foregoing I submit, my dear Sir, to your better judgment: acquit them or condemn them as seemeth good in your sight. 'Duncan Gray' is that kind of light-horse gallop of an air which precludes sentiment. The ludicrous is its ruling feature. Yours, ROBT. BURNS.

'Auld Rob Morris' was written by Burns on the basis of a rough old ditty which appears in Johnson's *Museum*, and of which he retained only the two initial lines.* 'Duncan Gray' also was founded on a rude old song in Johnson's *Museum*, the name only of the hero being retained, and a few phrases like 'On . . . when we were fou.'

Burns had now fairly settled down to town-life. Dumfries, when he came to live in it, had a population of about 5600, an hospital, and a poorhouse. The principal street was about three-quarters of a mile long, running parallel to the Nith; and there were seven or eight other streets, besides five or six lanes. The houses were built of brick and red freestone. Burns's first house—where he remained eighteen months—was in the Wee Vennel (now Bank Street), opening off the principal street. He had three little rooms on the first floor, all overlooking the street, and a small kitchen behind. The centre room, about the size of a bed-closet, was, as we have seen, the only place in which he could seclude himself for study. On the

* The second stanza is said to have been intended as a compliment to Charlotte Hamilton. Such at all events was the impression of her son, Major Adair. But Burns had already (Vol. II., p. 193) eulogised Phemie Murray at Ochtertyre in language almost identical.

ground-floor, John Syme of Ryedale,* who became an intimate friend, had his office for the distribution of stamps. On the floor above lived a blacksmith called George Haugh. On the opposite side of the street was the house of his landlord, Captain Hamilton, a connection of the Craiks of Arbigland.

The family furnished their house, partially at least, with the 'plenishing' from Ellisland. According to Mrs Burns, they brought with them a 'nice, little, braw cow,' which, however, had to be sold, as no proper grazing could be got for it. There were then three children living—Robert, Francis Wallace, and William Nicol. Though prices had doubled during the preceding twelve or twenty years, the cost of living was small compared with the present day. The servant whom Burns kept in his second Dumfries house would get as wages 50s. to £4 a year. Beef was 3d. to 5d. a lb.; mutton, 3d. to 4½d.; chickens, 7d. to 8d. a pair; butter (the lb. of 24 oz.), 7d. to 9d.; salmon, 6d. to 9½d. a lb.; cod, 1d. and even ½d. a lb.†

At this period the poet came once more across the path of Clarinda. Her visit to the West Indies had proved unfortunate. Her husband received her coldly; his temper was insupportable; and she was mortified to find that he had been unfaithful during the period of their separation. She was at the same time advised that she could not hope to keep her health in a warm climate. She therefore returned to Scotland in August, and resumed her old life in Edinburgh. She did not write to Burns immediately on her arrival. He addressed two letters to her friend, Mary Peacock, inquiring after the quondam 'mistress of his soul;' but they seem to have miscarried. He had concluded to write no more, when that sensibility to anniversaries which he had already shown in the case of Highland Mary overthrew his

* John Syme (1755–1831) was the son of a Kirkcudbrightshire laird, who also practised as a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh. He was for a time in the army, but retired. He was appointed Distributor of Stamps in Dumfries in 1791, and lived in Ryedale, a villa on the Maxwelltown or Kirkcudbrightshire side of the Nith.

† Burns (said Mrs Burns in her Reminiscences) 'was not an early riser, except when he had anything particular to do in the way of his profession. Even though he had dined out, he never lay after nine o'clock. The family breakfasted at nine. If he lay long in bed awake he was always reading. At all his meals he had a book beside him on the table. He did his work in the forenoon, and was seldom engaged professionally in the evening. He dined at two o'clock when he dined at home; was fond of plain things, and hated tarts, pies, and puddings. When at home in the evening he employed his time in writing and reading, with the children playing about him. Their prattle never disturbed him in the least.'

resolution. He remembered the parting of the 6th of December in the past year, and wrote a third brief letter to Miss Peacock.

TO MISS MARY PEACOCK.

DUMFRIES, *Dec.* 6, 1792.

DEAR MADAM—I have written so often to you and have got no answer, that I had resolved never to lift up a pen to you again; but this eventful day, *the sixth of December*, recalls to my memory such a scene! Heaven and earth! when I remember a far-distant person!—but no more of this until I learn from you a proper address and why my letters have lain by you unanswered, as this is the third I have sent you. The opportunities will be all gone now, I fear, of sending over the book I mentioned in my last. Do not write me for a week, as I shall not be at home; but as soon after that as possible.

Ance mair I hail thee, thou gloomy December!
Ance mair I hail thee wi' sorrow and care;
Dire was the parting thou bidst me remember,
Parting wi' Nancy, oh, ne'er to meet mair!

Yours, R. B.

It appears from this letter that Burns was not yet aware that Mrs M'Lehose had returned. His attention, besides, was fully occupied with an affair of a different character.

A most eventful year was now drawing to a close. In France, under the threatened interference of the German states and the *émigrés*, moderation and constitutionalism had been forced to give way before an aroused and enraged democracy; the king was a prisoner, under the shadow of approaching execution; the blood of thousands of loyalists had been shed in Paris; a republic had been established, promising with the aid of its victorious arms to revolutionise the whole of Europe. We have seen that in February neither the infection of the British mind with revolutionary ideas nor the possibility of a war with France was seriously apprehended in this country. But events had moved rapidly during the year. Paine's famous essay, *The Rights of Man*, and other publications generally declared to be of a seditious tendency, had appeared.* In the course of the summer, societies taking the name of 'Friends of the People' were established in many parts of the empire.

* *The Rights of Man* was published in 1791–1792.

Their overt object was to 'stem the torrent of corruption,' and bring about 'a redress of real grievances.' The specific measures they called for were 'a full, free, and equal representation of the people,' and a shortening of the duration of parliaments. They carefully disclaimed all extreme and dangerous courses, and professed to seek by timely reform to permanently strengthen the ancient institutions of the country. Yet, in the circumstances of the time, they were held by the governing classes to be dangerous to the peace of society. The great mass of the British people were quite satisfied with the existing order of things. Indeed, Paine had been mobbed at Dover. Nevertheless, towards the close of the year the government became seriously uneasy about what were freely denounced as revolutionary publications and seditious practices and opinions. It was now contemplating hostilities against the French, on the ostensible ground of their infraction of the rights of the Dutch in the opening of the Scheldt, but in reality for the purpose of attacking, and, if possible, extinguishing, a spirit which was felt to be dangerous to all altars and all thrones. As a matter of course, one of its first considerations was to secure the loyalty of its own officials.

Burns's sympathy with the French had never flagged. He did not attempt in company to conceal his disapproval of the British ministry's war policy or his desire to see accomplished those reforms which had long been demanded by the Whig party. He continued to denounce public men who differed from him with characteristically audacious vehemence. It does not appear that he had gone so far as to join 'The Friends of the People;' but some of his acts were accounted imprudent even by his best friends. For example, he subscribed to a paper called the *Gazetteer*,* which had been started in Edinburgh by a politician of the name of Johnston for the purpose of advocating reform. Johnston was so noted for his advanced views that at an aggregate meeting or convention of representatives from the different societies of reformers, which was held in James's Court, Edinburgh, on the 22d of November, he was unanimously called upon to take the chair, which, however, he declined to do. A few months afterwards he was imprisoned

* In the Library of the British Museum are three numbers (four pages each; price 3½d.) of *The Edinburgh Gazetteer*, 'Printed by W. Johnston, Esq. (for himself and the other Proprietors).'

by the authorities: and the same fate befell the succeeding editor of the *Gazetteer*. Even the printer—an honest Jacobite, of the name of Moir—found that his concern in the paper stopped his credit at banks and made him a marked man; and it was not till he entered a loyal volunteer regiment that his good name was in some degree restored. Burns, like Willie Gairlace and his friends in *Scotland's Skaith*, 'gat the *Gazetteer*.' These were the terms in which he ordered it:

TO CAPTAIN WM. JOHNSTON, EDINBURGH.

DUMFRIES, *Nov. 13th*, 1792.

SIR—I have just read your prospectus of the 'Edinburgh Gazetteer.' If you go on in your paper with the same spirit, it will, beyond all comparison, be the first composition of the kind in Europe. I beg leave to insert my name as a subscriber; and if you have already published any papers, please send me them from the beginning. Point out your own way of settling payments in this place, or I shall settle with you through the medium of my friend, Peter Hill, bookseller in Edinburgh.

Go on, Sir! Lay bare with undaunted heart and steady hand that horrid mass of corruption called politics and state-craft. Dare to draw in their native colours these—

Calm-thinking villains whom no faith can fire,*

whatever be the shibboleth of their pretended party.

The address to me at Dumfries will find, Sir, your very humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

Whether or not this letter was ever seen by any one in authority it is not likely that Burns's subscription to the *Gazetteer* was a secret. There can be little doubt that if it was known it would tell against him. So lately as 1817, an emissary of the Lord Advocate of the period traced out the subscribers to a liberal newspaper then started in Edinburgh—the first that obtained a footing after the demise of the *Gazetteer*. From the allusions, moreover, it seems highly probable that it was at this time that Burns threw off a poetical compliment to the leaders of the reforming party in parliament:

* Quoted from Pope's 'Temple of Fame,' line 410.

HERE'S TO THEM THAT'S AWA.

Here 's a health to them that 's awa,
An' here 's to them that 's awa :
And wha winna wish gude luck to our cause, will not
May never gude luck be their fa' ! fall=lot
It 's gude to be merry and wise ;
It 's gude to be honest and true ;
It 's gude to support Caledonia's cause
And bide by the Buff and the Blue.

Here 's a health to them that 's awa,
An' here 's to them that 's awa :
Here 's a health to Charlie,* the chief o' the clan,
Altho' that his band be but sma'
May Liberty meet wi' success !
May Prudence protect her frae evil !
May tyrants and tyranny tine i' the mist be lost
And wander the road to the devil !

Here 's a health to them that 's awa,
An' here 's to them that 's awa :
Here 's a health to Tammie,† the Norland laddie,
That lives at the lug o' the law !
Here 's freedom to him that wad read !
Here 's freedom to him that wad write !
There 's nane ever feared that the truth should be heard
But they wham the truth wad indite ! ‡

Here 's a health to them that 's awa,
An' here 's to them that 's awa :
Here 's Maitland and Wycombe, § and [may] wha does na like 'em
Be built in a hole in the wa' !

* Charles James Fox. Buff and blue, as has already been noticed, formed his well-known livery at the Westminster elections, and came to be an ensign of the Whig party generally.

† The Hon. Thomas Erskine, afterwards Lord Erskine.

‡ For *indict*, a Scotch law-phrase meaning *accuse*.

§ James Maitland, eighth Earl of Lauderdale (1759-1839), one of the sixteen peers of Scotland, and one of the founders of 'The Friends of the People.' He was at this time in France with Dr John Moore.——William Petty, Earl Wycombe, Marquis of Lansdowne, better known as Lord Shelburne (1737–1805), was also a supporter of parliamentary reform.

Here 's timmer that 's red at the heart ! timber
Here 's fruit that is sound at the core !
And may he that wad turn the Buff and Blue coat
Be turned to the back o' the door !

Here 's a health to them that 's awa,
An' here 's to them that 's awa :
Here 's Chieftain Macleod, a chieftain worth gowd,*
Tho' bred amang mountains o' snaw !
Here 's friends on baith sides o' the Firth !
And friends on baith sides o' the Tweed !
And wha wad betray Old Albion's rights,
May they never eat of her bread !

If such a song as this, known to be from the pen of Burns, came under the eye of his official superiors, it could not fail to obtain for him distinction of an unenviable kind.

On the 6th of December we find Burns, in a letter to Mrs Dunlop, alluding to his sentiments on public affairs as of the Opposition complexion, but stating that the sense of his situation made him cautious in the expression of them.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, *6th December* 1792.

I shall be in Ayrshire, I think, next week ; and if at all possible, I shall certainly, my much-esteemed friend, have the pleasure of visiting at Dunlop-house.

Alas, Madam ! how seldom do we meet in this world, that we have reason to congratulate ourselves on accessions of happiness ! I have not passed half the ordinary term of an old man's life, and yet I scarcely look over the obituary of a newspaper that I do not see some names that I have known, and which I, and other acquaintances, little thought to meet with there so soon. Every other instance of the mortality of our kind makes us cast an anxious look into the dreadful abyss of uncertainty and shudder with apprehension for our own fate. But of how different an importance are the lives of different individuals ? Nay, of what importance is one period of the same life more than another ?

* The famous General Norman Macleod (1754–1801) of Dunvegan, Isle of Skye, M.P. for the county of Inverness (1790–96). At the James's Court meeting above alluded to, Macleod made a speech in which he declared his unalterable determination to support and prosecute the reforming objects which the society had in view, for which a unanimous vote of thanks was tendered to him. When Macleod succeeded to the estates, there was a debt on them of £50,000 ; at his death it stood at £70,000.

A few years ago I could have lain down in the dust, 'careless of the voice of the morning;' and now, not a few, and these most helpless, individuals would, on losing me and my exertions, lose both their 'staff and shield.' By the way, these helpless ones have lately got an addition; Mrs B. having given me a fine girl since I wrote you.* There is a charming passage in Thomson's *Edward and Eleonora:*

> The valiant, *in himself*, what can he suffer?
> Or what need he regard his *single* woes? &c.

As I am got in the way of quotations, I shall give you another from the same piece, peculiarly, alas, too peculiarly, apposite, my dear Madam, to your present frame of mind:

> Who so unworthy but may proudly deck him
> With his fair-weather virtue, that exults
> Glad o'er the summer main? the tempest comes,
> The rough winds rage aloud; when from the helm
> This virtue shrinks, and in a corner lies
> Lamenting—Heavens! if privileged from trial,
> How cheap a thing were virtue!

I do not remember to have heard you mention Thomson's dramas. I pick up favorite quotations and store them in my mind as ready armour, offensive or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence. Of these is one, a very favorite one, from his *Alfred*—

> Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
> And offices of life; to life itself,
> With all its vain and transient joys, sit loose.

Probably I have quoted some of these to you formerly, as indeed when I write from the heart, I am apt to be guilty of such repetitions. The compass of the heart, in the musical style of expression, is much more bounded than that of the imagination, so the notes of the former are extremely apt to run into one another; but in return for the paucity of its compass, its few notes are much more sweet. I must still give you another quotation, which I am almost sure I have given you before, but I cannot resist the temptation. The subject is religion—speaking of its importance to mankind, the author says

> 'Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright;
> 'Tis *this* that gilds the horrors of our night.
> When wealth forsakes us and when friends are few;
> When friends are faithless or when foes pursue:
> 'Tis this that wards the blow or stills the smart;
> Disarms affliction or repels his dart;
> Within the breast bids purest raptures rise;
> Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.†

* Elizabeth Riddel, born 21st November, 1792.

† Quoted at Vol. II., p. 256 (from verses prefixed to Hervey's *Meditations*), and frequently in Burns's letters.

I see you are in for double postage, so I shall e'en scribble out t'other sheet. We in this country here have many alarms of the reforming, or rather the republican, spirit of your part of the kingdom. Indeed, we are a good deal in commotion ourselves. For me, I am *a placeman*, you know; a very humble one indeed, Heaven knows, but still so much so as to gag me. What my private sentiments are, you will find out without an interpreter. * * *

I have taken up the subject in another view, and the other day, for a pretty Actress's benefit-night, I wrote an Address, which I will give on the other page, called 'The Rights of Woman.'

I shall have the honor of receiving your criticisms in person at Dunlop.

R. B.

Burns did visit Ayrshire, and spent four days with Mrs Dunlop. He appears to have been utterly unconscious of any impending ill-fortune. At this very time, however, some information regarding his political opinions, if not acts, was on its way to the Board of Excise, and a cloud was about to burst on his head. It seems far from unlikely that a daring toast was the immediate cause of the displeasure he incurred. And it has been expressly stated that such a toast was 'one of the things which brought Burns into disgrace with his Excise masters:' it was '*Here's the last verse of the last chapter of the last* BOOK OF KINGS!'*

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

December 1792.

SIR—I have been surprised, confounded and distracted by Mr Mitchell, the Collector, telling me that he has received an order from your Board† to inquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to Government.

Sir, you are a husband—and a father. You know what you would feel, to see the much-loved wife of your bosom and your helpless, prattling little ones turned adrift into the world, degraded and disgraced from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected, and left almost without the necessary support of a miserable existence. Alas! Sir, must I think that such, soon, will be my lot! and from the d—mned dark insinuations of hellish, groundless envy, too! I believe, Sir, I may aver it, and in the sight of Omniscience, that I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors, if worse can be, than those

* Mentioned in Moore's Diary, on the authority of Mr Allen, of Holland House celebrity. The verse is in itself susceptible of a different meaning and application: 'And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.' But there can be little doubt that this was not the sense in which the poet meant the toast to be accepted.

† The Commissioners of the Scottish Board of Excise at this time were George Brown, Thomas Wharton, James Stodart, Robert Graham (of Fintry), and John Grieve.

I have mentioned, hung over my head; and I say that the allegation, whatever villain has made it, is a lie! To the British Constitution, on revolution principles, next after my God, I am most devoutly attached! You, Sir, have been much and generously my friend. Heaven knows how warmly I have felt the obligation and how gratefully I have thanked you! Fortune, Sir, has made you powerful and me impotent; has given you patronage and me dependence. I would not, for my single self, call on your humanity; were such my insular, unconnected situation, I would despise the tear that now swells in my eye—I could brave misfortune, I could face ruin; for at the worst, 'Death's thousand doors stand open:' but, good God! the tender concerns that I have mentioned, the claims and ties that I see at this moment and feel around me, how they unnerve Courage and wither Resolution! To your patronage, as a man of some genius, you have allowed me a claim; and your esteem, as an honest man, I know is my due: To these, Sir, permit me to appeal; by these may I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me and which, with my latest breath I will say it, I have not deserved. R. B.

There has been a dispute about the nature and extent of the trouble into which Burns fell on this occasion. His supervisor and friend, Findlater, who survived till 1839, was certain that only a very slight hint of disapprobation or warning was given to Burns, because any more serious censure must necessarily have been communicated through him. No notice of a reprimand to Burns has been found in the records of the Board of Excise. The poet himself made but a slight allusion to the matter in a letter to Mrs Dunlop, written a few days after; and scarcely referred to it at any subsequent time. All this would make it seem that Burns, in his letter to Mr Graham, expressed excessive, though not unnatural, alarm and warmth of indignation. On the other hand, rumour represented the poet as dismissed from his situation for his political heterodoxy, and he himself, in a letter which he wrote in April 1793, stated that but for Mr Graham's intercession he would have been dismissed.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

Dec. 31, 1792.

Dear Madam—A hurry of business, thrown in heaps by my absence, has until now prevented my returning my grateful acknowledgements to the good family of Dunlop, and you in particular, for that hospitable

kindness which rendered the four days I spent under that genial roof, four of the pleasantest I ever enjoyed.—Alas, my dearest friend! how few and fleeting are those things we call pleasures! On my road to Ayrshire, I spent a night with a friend whom I much valued—a man whose days promised to be many; and on Saturday last we laid him in the dust!

Jan. 2, 1793.

I have just received yours of the 30th; and feel much for your situation. However, I heartily rejoice in your prospect of recovery from that vile jaundice. As to myself, I am better, though not quite free of my complaint. You must not think, as you seem to insinuate, that in my way of life I want exercise. Of that I have enough; but occasional hard drinking is the devil to me. Against this I have again and again bent my resolution and have greatly succeeded. Taverns I have totally abandoned; it is the private parties in the family way, among the hard-drinking gentlemen of this country, that do me the mischief—but even this I have more than half given over.*

Mr Corbet can be of little service to me at present; at least I should be shy of applying. I cannot possibly be settled as a supervisor, for several years. I must wait the rotation of the list and there are twenty names before mine.† I might indeed get a job of officiating, where a settled supervisor was ill or aged; but that hauls me from my family, as I could not remove them on such an uncertainty. Besides, some envious, malicious devil has raised a little demur on my political principles, and I wish to let that matter settle before I offer myself too much in the eye of my supervisors. I have set, henceforth, a seal on my lips

* 'The following extract from a letter addressed by Robert Bloomfield, the Suffolk poet, author of *The Farmer's Boy*, to the Earl of Buchan, contains so interesting an exhibition of the modesty inherent in real worth, and so philosophical, and at the same time so poetical, an estimate of the different characters and destinies of Burns and its author, that I should esteem myself culpable were I to withhold it from the public view: "The illustrious soul that has left amongst us the name of Burns has often been lowered down to a comparison with me; but the comparison exists more in circumstances than in essentials. That man stood up with the stamp of superior intellect on his brow—a visible greatness: and great and patriotic subjects would only have called into action the powers of his mind, which lay inactive while he played calmly and exquisitely the pastoral pipe. The letters to which I have alluded in my preface to the *Rural Tales* were friendly warnings, pointed with immediate reference to the fate of that extraordinary man. 'Remember Burns!' has been the watchword of my friends. I do remember Burns; but I *am not* Burns!—neither have I his fire to fan or to quench, nor his passions to control! Where, then, is my merit, if I make a peaceful voyage on a smooth sea and with no mutiny on board? To a lady—I have it from herself—who remonstrated with him on his danger from drink and the pursuits of some of his associates, he replied: 'Madam, they would not thank me for my company if I did not drink with them. I *must* give them a slice of my constitution.' How much to be regretted that he did not give them thinner slices of his constitution, that it might have lasted longer!"'—Cromek.

† This would appear to prove that Burns was now abandoning the hope he had undoubtedly entertained for some time of receiving rapid promotion.

as to these unlucky politics; but to you I must breathe my sentiments. In this, as in every thing else, I shall shew the undisguised emotions of my soul. War I deprecate; misery and ruin to thousands are in the blast that announces the destructive demon. But * * *

5th January 1793.

You see my hurried life, Madam: I can only command starts of time: however, I am glad of one thing; since I finished the other sheet, the political blast that threatened my welfare is overblown. I have corresponded with Commissioner Graham, for the board had made me the subject of their animadversions; and now I have the pleasure of informing you that all is set to rights in that quarter. Now as to these informers, may the devil be let loose to —— but hold! I was praying most fervently in my last sheet, and I must not so soon fall a-swearing in this.

Alas! how little do the wantonly or idly officious think what mischief they do by their malicious insinuations, indirect impertinence or thoughtless blabbings! What a difference there is in intrinsic worth, candour, benevolence, generosity, kindness—in all the charities and all the virtues, between one class of human beings and another! For instance, the amiable circle I so lately mixed with in the hospitable hall of Dunlop, their generous hearts—their uncontaminated, dignified minds—their informed and polished understandings—what a contrast, when compared—if such comparing were not downright sacrilege—with the soul of the miscreant who can deliberately plot the destruction of an honest man that never offended him; and with a grin of satisfaction see the unfortunate being, his faithful wife and prattling innocents turned over to beggary and ruin! *

Your cup, my dear Madam, arrived safe. I had two worthy fellows dining with me the other day, when I, with great formality, produced

* Gilbert Burns, speaking of such a crisis, says that on the side of the government will be found ranged a great part of the wise and prudent; 'but on that side also will be found a great host of a very different description—all the satellites of power and the parasites of greatness, with all the worthless and detestable crew of time-serving and officious informers. At such times loyalty comes to be esteemed the cardinal virtue, capable of "hiding a multitude of sins;" and many who are conscious how worthless and hollow-hearted they are, seek to piece up their reputation, and ingratiate themselves with their superiors, by an extraordinary display of loyalty and attachment to the existing order of things, and a virtuous zeal in hunting down whoever has the audacity to question the conduct of men in power. To persons of that description, the imprudent poet had made himself peculiarly obnoxious by the unguarded freedom with which he expressed his opinions of the wonderful events then attracting the notice of every one; and their enmity was heightened by his unqualified expression, general and particular, of his contempt for such sycophantic characters. By such "*Loyal Natives*" was the conduct of our poet strictly watched, with the view of detecting every political transgression or private fault; every imprudence or failing was magnified and exaggerated to a frightful degree; and the public alarm which brought such characters into contact with the respectable orders of society, procured the admission and circulation of these injurious reports in such circles as made them be received without suspicion.'

my whigmeleerie cup * and told them that it had been a family-piece among the descendants of Sir William Wallace. This roused such an enthusiasm that they insisted on bumpering the punch round in it; and, by and by, never did your great ancestor lay a *Suthron* more completely to rest than for a time did your cup my two friends. Apropos, this is the season of wishing. May God bless you, my dear friend, and bless me, the humblest and sincerest of your friends, by granting you yet many returns of the season! May all good things attend you and yours, wherever they are scattered over the earth! R. B.

The merry-making alluded to in this letter has been identified, by tradition, with a carousal, the story of which has been thus told: 'The poet, not being on good terms with the parish clergy, and no great favourite at this time with most of the cloth, had still retained the friendship of a worthy and able man, the Rev. Mr M'Morine of Caerlaverock.† Meeting this gentleman in Dumfries on a market-day, when the country clergy usually came to town to hear the news, he asked him to come next forenoon to baptise his recently born infant; and Mr M'Morine came accordingly, but at an earlier hour than was perhaps expected. On being shown into Burns's parlour, he found the poet and two companions, apparently prolonging a sitting commenced the previous evening, the two visitors being in that state which Burns in his letter ascribes to his two "worthy fellows" as the result of bumpering with the *Wallace-cup*. The poet seemed taken by surprise, but quickly recovered his self-possession and soon put things in order for the ceremony.' Mr M'Morine used to tell the story against the poet. He 'was shocked by the idea of so prolonged a debauch, and thought meanly of the appearance of the two guests.'

The next letter is of great importance, because it contains an absolute denial of a grave indiscretion charged against Burns.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

DUMFRIES, *5th Jan.* 1793.

SIR—I am this moment honoured with your letter: with what feelings I received this other instance of your goodness, I shall not pretend to describe.

* This cup, of cocoa-nut, mounted upon a comparatively modern stalk, and rimmed with silver, was long in the possession of Mr Archibald Hastie, M.P. for Paisley. Whigmeleerie is 'whimsical,' 'fantastic.'

† William M'Morine, son of the minister of Kirkpatrick-Durham, was minister of Caerlaverock from 1784 until his death in 1832; had the degree of D.D. conferred on him by the University of Edinburgh, 1811; and was Moderator of the General Assembly of 1812.

Now to the charges which malice and misrepresentation have brought against me. It has been said, it seems, that I not only belong to, but head, a disaffected party in this place. I know of no party in this place either republican or reform, except an old party of borough-reform, with which I never had anything to do. Individuals, both republican or reform, we have, though not many of either; but if they have associated, it is more than I have the least knowledge of, and if there exists such an association, it must consist of such obscure, nameless beings as precludes any possibility of my being known to them, or they to me. I was in the playhouse one night when Ça Ira was called for. I was in the middle of the pit; and from the pit the clamour arose. One or two individuals with whom I occasionally associate were of the party, but I neither knew of the plot nor joined in the plot, nor even opened my lips either to hiss or huzza* that or any other political tune whatever. I looked on myself as far too obscure a man to have any weight in quelling a riot; at the same time, as a character of

* In this connection may be introduced a communication of Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe to Allan Cunningham—'I think you do human nature injustice as to malicious people entrapping Burns in his political conversations; for I know that he was most wofully indiscreet on that point, and I remember one proof. We were at the play in Dumfries in October 1792—the Caledonian Hunt being then in the town. The play was "As you like it," Miss Fontenelle, *Rosalind*, when "God save the King" was called for and sung; we all stood up uncovered, but Burns sat still in the middle of the pit with his hat on his head. There was a great tumult, with shouts of "Turn him out!—Shame, Burns!" which continued a good while. At last he was either expelled or forced to take off his hat—I forget which; nor can my mother remember. This silly conduct all sensible persons condemned.' It is quite possible that this statement refers to the very incident explained by Burns in his letter to Graham. As Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe was only eleven years of age at the time of the demonstration he describes, it would be absurd to expect him to have taken in the full significance of an ebullition of party feeling. There is no record of any disturbance in the newspapers of the period. On the contrary, we find in the *Dumfries Journal* of October 30th, 1792, such statements as 'The entertainments of the hunting races, balls, and assemblies, by the Caledonian and the Dumfries and Galloway Hunts being now over, we embrace the earliest opportunity of informing the public that they have been conducted with the utmost propriety, and, we believe, have given general satisfaction. . . . The performances of the stage in the evening gave high entertainment to crowds of genteel people collected at the theatre. Lady Hopetoun's box on Thursday evening, being the play asked by the Caledonian Hunt, exhibited an assemblage of nobility rarely to be seen in one box in the theatres of the metropolis.' Nor should it be forgotten that the Sharpes disliked Burns, and almost invariably spoke and wrote disparagingly of him. Finally, Burns's conduct—even as witnessed to by an excited boy of eleven—quite fits in with his explanation to his chief official superior: He and 'all the first characters in the place' declined to 'hiss or huzza any political tune whatever.' If *Ça ira* was clamoured for by one section of 'the rabble,' it is highly probable that 'God save the King' was demanded by another section. The boy Sharpe says expressly that it was 'called for.' In other words, from being the natural and pacific expression of constitutional loyalty, it became the shibboleth of a rowdy political section. By keeping 'his hat on his head' Burns merely indicated his refusal to 'hiss or huzza' what had been converted into 'a political tune.' His conduct, and that of 'all the first characters in the place' thus appears not 'silly' but judicious, and calculated not to provoke, but to allay, a riot. This view is supported by his letter of the 20th February, replying to a jocular remonstrance by Nicol, in which, significantly enough, both *Ça ira* and 'God save the King' are mentioned.

higher respectability than to yell in the howlings of a rabble. This was the conduct of all the first characters in the place; and these characters know, and will avow, that such was my conduct.

I never uttered any invectives against the king. His private worth it is altogether impossible that such a man as I can appreciate; and in his public capacity I always revered, and always will, with the soundest loyalty, revere the monarch of Great Britain, as, to speak in Masonic, the sacred KEYSTONE of OUR ROYAL ARCH CONSTITUTION.

As to REFORM PRINCIPLES, I look upon the British Constitution, as settled at the Revolution, to be the most glorious constitution on earth or that perhaps the wit of man can frame; at the same time, I think, and you know what high and distinguished characters have for some time thought so, that we have a good deal deviated from the original principles of that constitution; particularly, that an alarming system of corruption has pervaded the connection between the executive power and the House of Commons. This is the truth, and the whole truth, of my reform opinions, which, before I was aware of the complexion of these innovating times, I too unguardedly (now I see it) sported with; but henceforth I seal up my lips. However, I never dictated to, corresponded with or had the least connection with, any political association whatever—except, that when the magistrates and principal inhabitants of this town met to declare their attachment to the constitution and their abhorrence of riot, which declaration you would see in the papers, I, as I thought my duty as a subject at large and a citizen in particular called upon me—subscribed the same declaratory creed. Of Johnston the publisher of the 'Edinburgh Gazetteer,' I know nothing. One evening, in company with four or five friends, we met with his prospectus, which we thought manly and independent; and I wrote to him, ordering his paper for us. If you think that I act improperly in allowing his paper to come addressed to me, I shall immediately countermand it. I never, so judge me God! wrote a line of prose for the 'Gazetteer' in my life. An occasional address, spoken by Miss Fontenelle on her benefit-night here, which I called the 'Rights of Woman,' I sent to the 'Gazetteer,' as also some extempore stanzas on the commemoration of Thomson: both these I will subjoin for your perusal. You will see that they have nothing whatever to do with politics. At the time when I sent Johnston one of these poems, but which one I do not remember, I enclosed, at the request of my warm and worthy friend, Robert Riddel, Esq., of Glenriddel, a prose essay, signed 'Cato,' written by him and addressed to the delegates for the County Reform, of which he was one for this country. With the merits or demerits of that essay I have nothing to do, further than transmitting it in the same frank, which frank he had procured me.

As to France, I was her enthusiastic votary in the beginning of the business. When she came to shew her old avidity for conquest, in annexing Savoy,* &c., to her dominions and invading the rights of

* Savoy was annexed to France on November 27, 1792.

Holland, I altered my sentiments. A tippling ballad * which I made on the prince of Brunswick's breaking up his camp, and sung one convivial evening, I shall likewise send you, sealed up, as it is not [for] everybody's reading. This last is not worth your perusal; but lest MRS FAME should, as she has already done, use, and even abuse, her old privilege of lying, you shall be the master of everything, *le pour et le contre*, of my political writings and conduct.

This, my honoured patron, is all. To this statement I challenge disquisition. Mistaken prejudice or unguarded passion may mislead, and have often misled, me; but when called on to answer for my mistakes, though—I will say it—no man can feel keener compunction for his errors, yet, I trust, no man can be more superior to evasion or disguise.

I shall do myself the honour to thank Mrs Graham for her goodness in a separate letter.

If, sir, I have been so fortunate as to do away with these misapprehensions of my conduct and character, I shall, with the confidence which you were wont to allow me, apply to your goodness on every opening in the way of business where I think I with propriety may offer myself. An instance that occurs just now: Mr M'Farlane, supervisor of the Galloway district, is and has been for some time very ill. I spoke to Mr Mitchell as to his wishes to forward my application for the job; but though he expressed, and ever does express, every kindness for me, he hesitates, in hopes that the disease may be of short continuance. However, as it seems to be a paralytic affection, I fear that it may be some time ere he can take charge of so extended a district. There is a great deal of fatigue and very little business in the district—two things suitable enough to my hardy constitution and inexperience in that line of life.

I have the honour to be, sir, your ever-grateful, as highly-obliged, humble servant, ROBERT BURNS.

TO MRS GRAHAM OF FINTRY.

THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN,

AN OCCASIONAL ADDRESS, SPOKEN BY MISS FONTENELLE ON HER BENEFIT NIGHT, 26TH NOVR. 1792.†

To Mrs Graham of Fintry, this little poem, written in haste on the spur of the occasion, and therefore inaccurate; but a sincere compliment to that sex, the MOST AMIABLE OF THE WORKS OF GOD—is most respectfully presented by THE AUTHOR.

* Beginning—

When Princes and Prelates
And hot-headed zealots
A' Europe had set in a low, a low [flame].

† See *ante*.

On the same sheet follow verses

EXTEMPORE ON SOME COMMEMORATIONS OF THOMSON.

Dost thou not rise, indignant shade,
  And smile wi' spurning scorn
When they wha wad hae starved thy life — would
  Thy senseless turf adorn?

Helpless, alane, thou clamb the brae,
  Wi' mickle, mickle toil, — much
And claught th' unfading garland there, — caught
  Thy sair-won, rightful spoil.

And wear it there! and call aloud
  This axiom undoubted—
Would thou hae nobles' patronage?
  'First learn to live without it!'

To whom hae much, shall yet be given,
  Is every great man's faith;
But he, the helpless, needful wretch,
  Shall lose the mite he hath.

These verses, which, as Burns noted in his letter to Graham, were forwarded to the *Edinburgh Gazetteer*, clearly prove that Burns had now realised the true character of the Buchan celebrations 'in honour' of the poet Thomson.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, *January* 1793.

O POORTITH CAULD AND RESTLESS LOVE.

TUNE—*Cauld Kail in Aberdeen.**

O poortith cauld and restless love, — poverty
  Ye wrack my peace between ye;
Yet poortith a' I could forgive,
  An 'twere na for my Jeanie.

* This song is usually sung to the tune 'I had a horse, I had nae mair.'

Chorus—O why should Fate sic pleasure have, such
Life's dearest bands untwining?
Or why sae sweet a flower as love
Depend on Fortune's shining?*

The warld's wealth, when I think on
Its pride and a' the lave o''t; rest
O fie on silly coward man
That he should be the slave o''t!

Her e'en, sae bonie blue, betray
How she repays my passion;
But prudence is her o'erword ay: burden of her talk
She talks o' rank and fashion.

O wha can prudence think upon
And sic a lassie by him?
O wha can prudence think upon
And sae in love as I am?

How blest the humble cotter's fate!†
He woos his artless dearie;
The silly bogles, wealth and state,
Can never make him eerie. frightened

GALLA WATER.

Braw, braw lads on Yarrow-braes, Handsome
They rove amang the blooming heather;
But Yarrow-braes nor Ettrick shaws
Can match the lads o' Galla Water.

But there is ane, a secret ane,
Aboon them a' I loe him better; Above
And I'll be his, and he'll be mine,
The bonie lad o' Galla Water.

* Chorus—cancelled: For weel I loe my Jeanie, O,
I doat upon my Jeanie, O,
How happy I were she my ain, own
Tho' I had ne'er a guinea, O.

† In one manuscript, 'How blest the wild-wood Indian's fate.

Altho' his daddie was nae laird, no landholder
And tho' I hae na meikle tocher, much dowry
Yet rich in kindest, truest love,
We 'll tent our flocks by Galla Water. watch

It ne'er was wealth, it ne'er was wealth,
That coft contentment, peace or pleasure: bought
The bands and bliss o' mutual love,
O, that 's the chiefest warld's treasure.*

Many returns of the season to you, my dear Sir. How comes on your publication? Will these two be of any service to you? Dispose of them as seemeth good in thy sight. If you are begun with the work, I could like to see one of your proofs, merely from curiosity and, perhaps, to try to get you a subscriber or two. I should also like to know what other songs you print to each tune, besides the verses to which it is set. In short, I would wish to give you my opinion on all the poetry you publish. You know it is my trade: and a man in the way of his trade may suggest useful hints that escape men of much superior parts and endowments in other things.

If you meet with my dear and much-valued Cunningham, greet him in my name with the compliments of the season.—Yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

* Some years before composing the present beautiful song, Burns had given to the *Scots Musical Museum* (vol. ii., 1788) the following improved version of the original homely ballad, which, it may be mentioned, referred not to the lads, but to a *lass* of Gala Water, a tributary of the Tweed:

'Braw, braw lads of Galla Water;
O, braw lads of Galla Water;
I 'll kilt my coats aboon my knee, tuck up—above
And follow my love thro' the water.

'Sae fair her hair, sae brent her brow, smooth
Sae bonny blue her een, my dearie;
Sae white her teeth, sae sweet her mou';
The mair I kiss she 's aye my dearie. more

'O'er yon bank and o'er yon brae,
O'er yon moss amang the heather;
I 'll kilt my coats aboon my knee
And follow my love thro' the water.

'Down amang the broom, the broom,
Doun amang the broom, my dearie,
The lassie lost a silken snood,*
That cost her mony a blirt and blear ee.'†

* Ribbon to bind the hair. † Eyes showing the marks of weeping.

Gilbert Burns, in his memoranda as to heroines, written for Thomson, places opposite 'Poortith Cauld'—'A Miss Jane Blackstock, afterwards Mrs Whitier of Liverpool:' it is more probable that Jean Lorimer inspired the verses. In the manuscript, Thomson makes a pencil-note on the margin—'These verses, I humbly think, have too much of uneasy, cold reflection for the air, which is pleasing and rather gay than otherwise.' The letter having apparently been returned to Burns, he adds: 'The objections are just, but I cannot make it better. The *stuff* won't bear mending; yet, for private reasons, I should like to see it in print.'

SONNET:

WRITTEN ON THE 25TH JANUARY 1793, THE BIRTH-DAY OF THE AUTHOR, ON HEARING A THRUSH SING ON A MORNING WALK.

Sing on, sweet thrush, upon the leafless bough;
Sing on, sweet bird, I 'll listen to thy strain;
See aged Winter, 'mid his surly reign,
At thy blythe carol clears his furrowed brow.

Thus in lone Poverty's dominion drear
Sits meek Content, with light, unanxious heart;
Welcomes the rapid moments, bids them part,
Nor asks if they bring aught to hope or fear.

I thank thee, Author of this opening day,
Thou whose bright sun now gilds yon orient skies!
Riches denied, thy boon was purer joys,
What Wealth could never give nor take away!

Yet come, thou child of Poverty and Care!
The mite high Heaven bestowed, that mite with thee I 'll share.

GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, *Jan. 20th*, 1793.

You make me happy, my dear Sir, and thousands will be happy to see the charming songs you have sent me. Many merry returns of the sea-

son to you ; and may you long continue among the sons and daughters of Caledonia, to delight them and to honour yourself.

The four last songs with which you favoured me, viz., 'Auld Rob Morris,' 'Duncan Gray,' 'Galla Water,' and 'Cauld Kail,' are admirable. Duncan is indeed 'a lad of grace' and his humour will endear him to every body. The distracted lover in 'Auld Rob' and the happy shepherdess in 'Galla Water' exhibit an excellent contrast : they speak from genuine feeling and powerfully touch the heart.

The number of songs which I had originally in view was limited ; but I now resolve to include every Scotch air and song worth singing, leaving none behind but mere gleanings, to which the publishers of *omnegatherum* are welcome. I would rather be the editor of a collection from which nothing could be taken away than of one to which nothing could be added. We intend presenting the subscribers with two beautiful stroke-engravings—the one characteristic of the plaintive, and the other of the lively, songs ; and I have Dr Beattie's promise of an essay on the subject of our national music, if his health will permit him to write it. As a number of our songs have doubtless been called forth by particular events or by the charms of peerless damsels, there must be many curious anecdotes relating to them.

The late Mr [William] Tytler of Woodhouselee, I believe, knew more of this than anybody, for he joined to the pursuits of an antiquary a taste for poetry, besides being a man of the world and possessing an enthusiasm for music beyond most of his contemporaries. He was quite pleased with this plan of mine, for I may say it has been solely managed by me ; and we had several long conversations about it when it was in embryo. If I could simply mention the name of the heroine of each song and the incident which occasioned the verses, it would be gratifying. Pray, will you send me any information of this sort, as well with regard to your own songs as the old ones ?

To all the favourite songs of the plaintive or pastoral kind will be joined the delicate accompaniments, &c., of Pleyel. To those of the comic and humorous class I think accompaniments scarcely necessary : they are chiefly fitted for the conviviality of the festive board ; and a tuneful voice, with a proper delivery of the words, renders them perfect. Nevertheless, to these I propose adding bass accompaniments, because then they are fitted either for singing or for instrumental performance, when there happens to be no singer. I mean to employ our right trusty friend, Mr Clarke, to set the bass to these, which he assures me he will do *con amore* and with much greater attention than he ever bestowed on anything of the kind. But for this last class of airs I will not attempt to find more than one set of verses.

That eccentric bard, Peter Pindar, has started I know not how many difficulties about writing for the airs I sent him, because of the peculiarity of the measure and the trammels they impose on his flying Pegasus. I subjoin for your perusal the only one I have yet got from him, being for the fine air 'Lord Gregory.' The Scots verses printed

with that air are taken from the middle of an old ballad called 'The Lass of Lochroyan,' which I do not admire.* I have set down the air therefore as a creditor of yours. Many of the Jacobite songs are replete with wit and humour; might not the best of these be included in our volume of comic songs? G. T.

POSTSCRIPT FROM THE HON. ANDREW ERSKINE.†

Mr Thomson has been so obliging as to give me a perusal of your songs. 'Highland Mary' is most enchantingly pathetic and 'Duncan Gray' possesses native genuine humour: 'Spak o' loupin o'er a linn' is a line of itself that should make you immortal. I sometimes hear of you from our mutual friend, Cunningham, who is a most excellent fellow, possessing, above all men I know, the charm of a most obliging disposition. You kindly promised me, about a year ago, a collection of your unpublished productions, *religious* and amorous. I know from experience how irksome it is to copy. If you will get any trusty person in Dumfries to write them over fair, I will give Peter Hill whatever he asks for his trouble and I certainly shall not betray your confidence. I am, your hearty admirer, ANDREW ERSKINE.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

January 26th, 1793.

I approve greatly, my dear Sir, of your plans: Dr Beattie's Essay will of itself be a treasure. On my part, I mean to draw up an appendix to the Doctor's Essay, containing my stock of anecdotes, &c., of our Scots Airs and Songs. All the late Mr Tytler's anecdotes I have by me, taken down in the course of my acquaintance with him, from his own mouth. I am such an enthusiast that, in the course of my several peregrinations through Scotland, I made a pilgrimage to the individual spot from which any popular song took its rise, 'Lochaber' and 'The Braes of Ballendean' excepted. So far as the locality, either from the title of the air or the tenor of the song, could be ascertained, I have paid my devotion at the particular shrine of every Scots Muse.

I don't doubt but you might make a very valuable collection of Jacobite songs; but would it give no offence? In the meantime, do not you think that some of them, particularly 'The Sow's Tail to Geordie,' as an Air, with other words, might be well worth its place in your collection of lively Songs?

If it were possible to procure songs of merit, it would be proper to have one set of Scots words to every air and *that* the set of words to which

* This ballad is printed in several collections, including Herd's, Scott's, and Jamieson's. It is possessed of considerable merit, and tells the story of a 'Fair Annie' who goes with her child to the door of her lover, Lord Gregory, but is turned away by his mother, and dies.

† See note, Vol. III., p. 82.

the notes ought to be set. There is a naïveté, a pastoral simplicity, in a slight intermixture of Scots words and phraseology, which is more in unison—at least to my taste, and, I will add, to every genuine Caledonian taste—with the simple pathos or rustic sprightliness of our native music than any English verses whatever. For instance, in my 'Auld Rob Morris' you propose, instead of the word 'discriving' to substitute the word 'all-telling,' which would spoil the rusticity—the pastoral of the stanza.

The very name of Peter Pindar is an acquisition to your work. His 'Gregory'* is beautiful. I have tried to give you a set of stanzas in Scots on the same subject which are at your service. Not that I intend to enter the lists with Peter—that would be presumption indeed! My song, though much inferior in poetic merit, has, I think, more of the ballad simplicity in it.

LORD GREGORY.

O mirk, mirk is this midnight hour, dark
And loud the tempest's roar;
A waefu' wand'rer seeks thy tower,
Lord Gregory, ope thy door.

An exile frae her father's ha',
And a' for sake o' thee;
At least some pity on me shaw, show
If love it may na be.

* Dr Wolcot's song is as follows:

'Ah ope, Lord Gregory, thy door!
A midnight wanderer sighs;
Hard rush the rains, the tempests roar,
And lightnings cleave the skies.'

'Who comes with wo at this drear night—
A pilgrim of the gloom?
If she whose love did once delight,
My cot shall yield her room.'

'Alas! thou heard'st a pilgrim mourn,
That once was prized by thee:
Think of the ring by yonder burn,
Thou gav'st to love and me.

'But shouldst thou not poor Marion know,
I'll turn my feet and part;
And think the storms that round me blow
Far kinder than thy heart.'

'It is but doing justice to Dr Wolcot, to mention that his song is the original. Mr Burns saw it, liked it, and immediately wrote the other on the same subject, which is derived from the old Scottish ballad of uncertain origin.'—Currie.

Lord Gregory, mind'st thou not the grove
By bonie Irwine side,
Where first I own'd that virgin love
I lang, lang had denied.

How aften didst thou pledge and vow
Thou wad for ay be mine! would
And my fond heart, itsel sae true,
It ne'er mistrusted thine.

Hard is thy heart, Lord Gregory,
And flinty is thy breast:
Thou bolt of Heaven that flashest by,
O, wilt thou bring me rest!

Ye must'ring thunders from above
Your willing victim see;
But spare and pardon my fause Love, false
His wrangs to Heaven and me.

Your remark of the first stanza of my 'Highland Mary' is just, but I cannot alter it without injuring the poetry in proportion as I mend the perspicuity: so, if you please, we will let it stand as it is. My other songs—you will see what alterations I have made in them.

If you think that my name can be of any service to your advertisement, you are welcome. My most respectful compliments to the Honourable Gentleman who favored me with a postscript in your last. He shall hear from me and receive his MSS. soon. Yours, ROBT. BURNS.

Burns's real (or supposed) difficulties with the Board of Excise had become known to his Edinburgh friends, and the most intimate of them wrote a letter of remonstrance.

'FROM MY WORTHY FRIEND, MR NICOL OF THE HIGH SCHOOL, EDINBURGH, ALLUDING TO SOME TEMERAIRE CONDUCT OF MINE IN THE POLITICAL OPINIONS OF THE DAY.'

EDINBURGH, 10*th February* 1793.

DEAR CHRISTLESS BOBBIE—What is become of thee? Has the Devil flown off with thee, as the gled [kite] does with a bird? If he should do so there is little matter, if the reports concerning thy *imprudence* are true. What concerns it thee whether the lousy Dumfriesian fiddlers play 'Ça

Ira' or 'God save the King?' Suppose you *had* an aversion to the King, you could not, as a gentleman, wish God to use him worse than He has done. The infliction of idiocy is no sign of Friendship or Love; and I am sure damnation is a matter far beyond your wishes or ideas. But reports of this kind are only the insidious suggestions of ill-minded persons; for your good sense will ever point out to you, as well as to me, a bright model of political conduct who flourished in the victorious reign of Queen Anne, viz., the Vicar of Bray, who, during the convulsions of Great Britain which were without any former example, saw eight reigns, in perfect security; because he remembered that precept of the *sensible, shrewd, temporising* Apostle, 'We ought not to resist the Higher Powers.'*

You will think I have gotten a pension from Government; but I assure you no such a thing has been offered me. In this respect my vanity prompts me to say they have not been so *wise* as I would have wished them to be; for I think their Honors have often employed as impotent scribblers.

Enough of Politics. What is become of Mrs Burns and the dear bairns? How is my Willie? Tell her, though I do not write often, my best wishes shall ever attend her and the family. My wife, who is in a high devotional fit this evening, wishes that she and her children may be reckoned the favorites of the Lord and numbered with the elect. She indeed leaves your honor and me to shift for ourselves; as, so far as she can judge from the criteria laid down in Guthrie's *Trial of a Saving Interest*, both you and I are stamped with the marks of Reprobation.

May all the curses from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation light, materially and effectually, on thy enemies; and may all the blessings of the Covenant be eminently exemplified in thy person, to the glory of a forgiving Deity!

Here or elsewhere I am always thine sincerely, WILLM. NICOL.

TO MR WILLIAM NICOL.

DUMFRIES, 20*th Feb.* 1793.

O Thou, wisest among the Wise, meridian blaze of Prudence, full-moon of Discretion and chief of many Counsellors! How infinitely is thy puddle-headed, rattle-headed, wrong-headed, round-headed slave indebted to thy super-eminent goodness, that from the luminous path of thy own right-lined rectitude thou lookest benignly down on an erring wretch, of whom the zig-zag wanderings defy all the powers of calculation, from the simple computation of units up to the hidden mysteries of fluxions! May one feeble ray of that light of wisdom which darts from thy sensorium, straight as the arrow of heaven and bright as the meteor

* This is the subject of a song in *The Blackbird;* the chorus is

And this is law I will maintain
Until my dying day, Sir:
That whatsoever king shall reign,
I will be Vicar of Brae, Sir.

of inspiration descending from the holy and undefiled Priesthood against the head of the Unrighteous—may it be my portion, so that I may be less unworthy of the face and favour of that father of Proverbs and master of Maxims, that antipode of Folly and magnate among the Sages, the wise and witty Willie Nicol! Amen! Amen! Yea, so be it!

For me, I am a beast, a reptile, and know nothing! From the cave of my ignorance, amid the fogs of my dulness and pestilential fumes of my political heresies, I look up to thee, as doth a toad through the iron-barred lucerne of a pestiferous dungeon to the cloudless glory of a summer sun! Sorely sighing in bitterness of soul, I say 'When shall my name be the quotation of the wise and my countenance be the delight of the godly, like the illustrious lord of Laggan's * many hills? As for him, his works are perfect: never did the pen of Calumny blur the fair page of his reputation nor the bolt of Hatred fly at his dwelling. At his approach is the standing up of men, even the Chiefs and the Rulers; and before his presence the frail form of lovely Woman, humbly awaiting his pleasure, is extended in the dust.'

Thou mirror of Purity, when shall the elfin-lamp of my glimmerous understanding, purged from sensual appetites and gross desires, shine like the constellation of thy intellectual powers! As for thee, thy thoughts are pure and thy lips are holy. Never did the unhallowed breath of the powers of darkness and the pleasures of darkness pollute the sacred flame of thy sky-descended and heavenward desires; never did the vapours of impurity stain the unclouded serene of thy cerulean imagination. O that like thine were the tenor of my life, like thine the tenor of my conversation! then should no friend fear for my strength, no enemy rejoice in my weakness! Then should I lie down and rise up, and none to make me afraid. May thy pity and thy prayer be exercised for—O thou lamp of Wisdom and mirror of Morality!—

Thy devoted slave, ROBT. BURNS.

Burns gave also pungent expression to the sentiments on politics which had been to some extent the outcome of his own experience

* Burns here makes a sarcastic allusion to 'the lands of Meikle and Little Laggan, lying in the barony of Snaid, parish of Glencairn, and shire of Dumfries,' and consisting of 284 acres, between four and five miles from Ellisland, and about a mile and a half from Maxwelton House, which Nicol had purchased for £1600 in 1790, and which has been described both by Currie and Cunningham, but quite erroneously, as the scene of 'Willie brewed a peck o' maut.' Nicol's 'mansion,' when he acquired it, was little better than a hut consisting of two rooms—the one a kitchen, the other a byre for a cow. He slightly improved it by adding a room, and, according to Grierson of Dalgoner, leased it to Mr Currie of Gallaberry for £105 a year. Laggan forms once more a part of Maxwelton property, having been purchased by Sir Emilius Laurie. It is now known as Laggan Park. Laggan, in Dunscore, sometimes confused with it, belonged to John Morin, who bought Ellisland from Patrick Miller when Burns removed to Dumfries. It is now the property of Mrs Hunter-Arundell of Barjarg Tower, in the parish of Keir.

in a letter—containing a 'Political Catechism'—to a friend of stronger character than Nicol.

TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.

DUMFRIES, 20*th Feb.* 1793.

What are you doing? What hurry have you got on your head, my dear Cunningham, that I have not heard from you? Are you deeply engaged in the mazes of law, the mysteries of love or in the profound wisdom of modern politics?—Curse on the word which ended the period!

Quere. What is Politics?

Answer. Politics is a science wherewith, by means of nefarious cunning and hypocritical pretence, we govern civil politics for the emolument of ourselves and adherents.

Quere. What is a Minister?

Answer. A Minister is an unprincipled fellow who, by the influence of hereditary or acquired wealth—by superior abilities or by a lucky conjuncture of circumstances, obtains a principal place in the administration of the affairs of government.

Quere. What is a Patriot?

Answer. A Patriot is an individual exactly of the same description as a Minister, only out of place.

I am interrupted in my catechism; and am returned at a late hour just to subscribe my name, to put you in mind that there is a forgotten friend of yours of that name, still in the land of the living, though I can hardly say 'in the place of hope.'

I made the following Sonnet the other day, which has been so lucky as to obtain the approbation of no ordinary judge—our friend Syme.

[Sonnet on Hearing a Thrush on a Morning Walk.]

Adieu. ROBT. BURNS.

Miss Peacock had answered Burns's letter of the 6th of December, giving him an account of the return of Mrs M'Lehose to Scotland, but apparently not encouraging him to renew his correspondence with Clarinda. The letter did not reach the hands of the poet for a considerable time, in consequence of an accident. When at length made aware that Clarinda was once more in Edinburgh, he sent her this letter:

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.

I suppose, my dear Madam, that by your neglecting to inform me of your arrival in Europe—a circumstance that could not be indifferent to me, as, indeed, no occurrence relating to you can—you meant to leave me

to guess and gather that a correspondence I once had the honour and felicity to enjoy is to be no more. Alas! what heavy-laden sounds are these—'No more!' The wretch who has never tasted pleasure has never known woe; what drives the soul to madness is the recollection of joys that are 'no more!' But this is not language to the world: they do not understand it. But come, ye few—the children of Feeling and Sentiment!—ye whose trembling bosom-chords ache to unutterable anguish, as recollection gushes on the heart!—ye who are capable of an attachment keen as the arrow of Death and strong as the vigour of immortal being—come! and your ears shall drink a tale——But hush! I must not, cannot tell it: agony is in the recollection and frenzy in the recital!

But, Madam,—to leave the paths that lead to madness,—I congratulate your friends on your return; and I hope that the precious health, which Miss Peacock tells me is so much injured, is restored or restoring. There is a fatality attends Miss Peacock's correspondence and mine. Two of my letters, it seems, she never received; and her last, which came when I was in Ayrshire, was unfortunately mislaid and only found about ten days or a fortnight ago, on removing a desk of drawers.

I present you a book:* may I hope you will accept of it? I daresay you will have brought your books with you. The fourth volume of the Scots Songs is published: I will presume to send it you. Shall I hear from you? But first hear me. No cold language—no prudential documents: I despise advice and scorn control. If you are not to write such language, such sentiments as you know I shall wish, shall delight, to receive, I conjure you, by wounded pride! by ruined peace! by frantic, disappointed passion! by all the many ills that constitute that sum of human woes, a broken heart!!!—to me be silent for ever! If ever you insult me with the unfeeling apophthegms of cold-blooded caution, may all the——but hold! a fiend could not breathe a malevolent wish on the head of my angel! Mind my request—If you send me a page baptised in the font of sanctimonious prudence, by heaven, earth and hell, I will tear it to atoms! Adieu; may all good things attend you!

R. B.

Burns included this composition in the volume of Letters he transcribed for Riddel, and headed it 'Letter to a Lady, never scrolled, but copied from the original Letter.' He appended to it this note: 'I need scarcely remark that the foregoing was the fustian rant of enthusiastic youth.' This misleading allusion to 'enthusiastic youth' would seem to show that Burns rather repented of the passion displayed in the final paragraph.

* Probably a copy of the new edition of his *Poems*.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

20th March 1793.

MARY MORISON.

TUNE—*Duncan Davidson.*

O Mary, at thy window be,* &c.

MY DEAR SIR—The song prefixed is one of my juvenile works. I leave it among your hands. I do not think it very remarkable, either for its merits or demerits. It is impossible—at least I feel it in my stinted powers—to be always original, entertaining and witty.

What has become of the list of your songs? I shall be out of all temper with you by and by. I have always looked on myself as the Prince of indolent correspondents and valued myself accordingly; and I will not, cannot, bear rivalship from you nor anybody else. I wish much to have the list and to hear how you come on. Yours, ROBT. BURNS.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[*March* 1793.]

WANDERING WILLIE.

Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Now tired with wandering, haud awa hame; make for home
Come to my bosom, my ae only dearie, one
And tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

Loud blew the cauld winter winds at our parting;
It wasna the blast brought the tear in my e'e:
Now welcome the simmer, and welcome my Willie,
The simmer to nature, my Willie to me.

Ye hurricanes, rest in the cave o' your slumbers!
O, how your wild horrors a lover alarms!
Awaken, ye breezes! row gently, ye billows! roll
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

But if he 's forgotten his faithfullest Nannie,
O still flow between us, thou wide-roaring main!
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
But, dying, believe that my Willie 's my ain! own

* See Vol. I., p. 95.

I leave you, my dear sir, to determine whether the above or 'Thro' the Lang Muir' be the best.

OPEN THE DOOR TO ME.

[WITH ALTERATIONS.]

Oh, open the door, some pity to shew,
Oh, open the door to me, oh:
Tho' thou hast been false, I'll ever prove true,
Oh, open the door to me, oh.

Cauld is the blast upon my pale cheek,
But caulder thy love for me, oh:
The frost that freezes the life at my heart
Is nought to my pains frae thee, oh.

The wan Moon is setting behind the white wave,
And Time is setting with me, oh:
False friends, false love, farewell! for mair
I'll ne'er trouble them nor thee, oh.

She has open'd the door, she has open'd it wide,
She sees the pale corse on the plain, oh:
'My true love!' she cried, and sank down by his side,
Never to rise again, oh.

I do not know whether the song be really mended.* R. B.

TO MISS BENSON, YORK.

DUMFRIES, 21*st March* 1793.

MADAM—Among many things for which I envy those hale, long-lived old fellows before the flood is this in particular: that when they met with any body after their own heart, they had a charming long prospect of many, many happy meetings with them in after-life.

Now, in this short, stormy winter-day of our fleeting existence, when

* How much of the original Irish air Burns retained does not appear. But the 'reality' of the 'mending' is unquestionable. Of 'And Time is setting with me, oh,' Carlyle has written 'It gives in a single line, to the saddest feeling, the saddest environment and local habitation.'

you, now and then, in the Chapter of Accidents, meet an individual whose acquaintance is a real acquisition, there are all the probabilities against you that you shall never meet with that valued character more. On the other hand, brief as this miserable being is, it is none of the least of the miseries belonging to it that if there is any miscreant whom you hate or creature whom you despise, the ill-run of the chances shall be so against you that, in the overtakings, turnings and jostlings of life, pop! at some unlucky corner, eternally comes the wretch upon you and will not allow your indignation or contempt a moment's repose. As I am a sturdy believer in the powers of darkness, I take these to be the doings of that old author of mischief, the devil. It is well-known that he has some kind of short-hand way of taking down our thoughts; and I make no doubt that he is perfectly acquainted with my sentiments respecting Miss Benson: how much I admired her abilities and valued her worth; and how very fortunate I thought myself in her acquaintance. For this last reason, my dear Madam, I must entertain no hopes of the very great pleasure of meeting with you again.

Miss Hamilton tells me that she is sending a packet to you and I beg leave to send you the inclosed sonnet, though, to tell you the real truth, the sonnet is a mere pretence, that I may have the opportunity of declaring with how much respectful esteem I have the honor to be, &c.

R. B.

Burns, as we have already seen, was acquainted with Mr Craik of Arbigland, having probably been introduced to him by his friend and landlord, Captain Hamilton, a connection of the family. At Arbigland he had met Miss Benson, who was there on a visit. She subsequently told the following story of the meeting:

'I dined with Burns at Arbigland; he was witty, drank as others drank, and was long in coming to the tea-table. It was then the fashion for young ladies to be busy about something—I was working a flower. The poet sat down beside me, talked of the beauty of what I was imitating, and put his hand so near the work that I said: "Well, take it and do a bit yourself." "O ho!" said he, "you think my hand is unsteady with wine. I cannot work a flower, madam; but" —— he pulled the thread out of the needle and re-threaded it in a moment. "Can a tipsy man do that?" He talked to me of his children, more particularly of his eldest son, and called him a promising boy. "And yet, madam," he said, with a sarcastic glance of his eye, "I hope he will turn out a glorious blockhead, and so make his fortune."'

Singularly enough, it was the fortune of Miss Benson, when Mrs Basil Montagu, to meet and correspond with Thomas Carlyle, who records in his *Reminiscences*: 'In early life she had made some visits to Nithsdale (to the Craiks of Arbigland), and had seen Burns, of whom her worship continued fervent, her few recollections always a jewel she was ready to produce. She must have been strikingly beautiful at that time, and Burns's recognition and adoration would not be wanting; the most royally courteous of mankind she always defined him, as the first mark of his genius.'*

The eldest son of the poet was now between six and seven years old, bright, intelligent, and gifted with a tenacious memory. Burns, like his father before him, was most careful about the education of his children. Finding that the excellent school (now the academy) of Dumfries was open at a lower scale of fees to the children of burgesses than to those of strangers, he recalled that, on his first visit to the place in June 1787, he had been invested with an honorary burgess-ticket, so that he was all but entitled to a very desirable privilege. He accordingly addressed the following application to the municipal authorities:

TO THE HON. THE LORD PROVOST, BAILIES AND TOWN COUNCIL OF DUMFRIES.

[*March* 1793.]

My Lord and Gentlemen—The literary taste and liberal spirit of your good town has so ably filled the various departments of your schools as to make it a very great object for a parent to have his children educated in them. Still, to me, a stranger, with my large family and very stinted income, to give my young ones that education I wish, at the high school-fees which a stranger pays, will bear hard upon me.

Some years ago your good town did me the honor of making me an

* Miss Benson, whose father was a wine-merchant in York, first married Thomas Skepper, a young lawyer of German extraction, in that city. By him she had a daughter, Anne, a 'brisk, witty, prettyish, sufficiently clear-eyed and sharp-tongued young lady,' who married the poet, Bryan W. Procter, better known as Barry Cornwall. Being left destitute, Mrs Skepper accepted the position of governess in the family of Basil Montagu, whom Carlyle describes as 'a Chancery barrister in excellent practice, hugely a *sage*, busy all his days upon *Bacon's Works*, and continually preaching a superfinish morality about benevolence, munificence, health, peace, unfailing happiness.' Finally, she became Montagu's third wife. She died in 1856, at the age of eighty-three.

Honorary Burgess. Will your honors allow me to request that this mark of distinction may extend so far as to put me on the footing of a real Freeman of the Town, in the schools?

That I may not appear altogether unworthy of this favor, allow me to state to you some little services I have lately done to a branch of your revenue. The two-pennies exigible on foreign ale vended within your limits—in this rather-neglected article of your income I am ready to shew that, within these few weeks, my exertions have secured for you of those duties nearly the sum of Ten Pounds; and in this, too, I was the only one of the gentlemen of the Excise (except Mr Mitchell, whom *you pay* for his trouble) who took the least concern in the business.

If you are so very kind as to grant my request, it will certainly be a constant incentive to me to strain every nerve where, in that or any other way, I can officially serve you; and will, if possible, increase that grateful respect with which I have the honor to be, My Lord and Gentlemen, your devoted, humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

The request was immediately complied with, and young Robert Burns, and one or two of his brothers, were receiving an excellent education, at comparatively small expense, when their father died.

Meanwhile the enlarged edition of the *Poems*—proposed by Creech in April of 1792—had been making progress, though slowly. Burns had 'lippened' to Tytler to correct his proofs: this the lawyer had done, but he had also introduced many new readings—few, if any, of them improvements on the Poet. The volumes were ready on February 18, 1793;* and, of course, Burns had to remind Creech of the agreement that he was to have some copies for presentation to his friends:

TO WILLIAM CREECH, ESQ.

DUMFRIES, 28*th Feb.* 1793.

SIR—I understand that my book is published. I beg that you will, as soon as possible, send me twenty copies of it. As I mean to present them among a few Great Folk whom I respect and a few Little Folk whom I love, these twenty will not interfere with your sale. If you have not twenty copies ready, send me any number you can. It will confer a particular obligation to let me have them by first carrier.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

* 'On Monday next will be Published, by William Creech (Elegantly printed in two volumes, royal paper, price 6s. in boards) *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect. The Second Edition greatly enlarged with New Poems.* By Robert Burns.'—*Edinburgh Evening Courant*, Saturday, February 16, 1793.

A few copies were forwarded in answer to the poet's request. The following letters, with copies, were sent to friends:

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.*

My Lord—When you cast your eye on the name at the bottom of this letter and on the title-page of the book I do myself the honor to send your Lordship, a more pleasureable feeling than my vanity tells me that it must be a name not entirely unknown to you. The generous patronage of your late illustrious brother found me in the utmost obscurity: he introduced my rustic muse to the partiality of my country; and to him I owe all. My sense of his goodness and the anguish of my soul at losing my truly noble protector and friend I have endeavoured to express in a poem to his memory, which I have now published. This edition is just from the press; and in my gratitude to the dead and my respect for the living (Fame belies you, my Lord, if you possess not the same dignity of man which was your noble brother's characteristic feature), I had destined a copy for the Earl of Glencairn. I learnt just now that you are in town: allow me to present it you.

I know, my Lord, such is the vile, venal contagion which pervades the world of letters, that professions of respect from an author, particularly from a Poet to a Lord, are more than suspicious. I claim my by-past conduct and my feelings at this moment as exceptions to the too just conclusion. Exalted as are the honors of your Lordship's name and unnoted as is the obscurity of mine, with the uprightness of an honest man I come before your Lordship, with an offering, however humble—'tis all I have to give—of my grateful respect; and to beg of you, my Lord—'tis all I have to ask of you—that you will do me the honor to accept of it.

I have the honor to be, your Lordship's humble servant,

Robt. Burns.

TO PATRICK MILLER, ESQ. OF DALSWINTON.

Dumfries, *April* 1793.

Sir,—My poems having just come out in another edition, will you do me the honor to accept of a copy? A mark of my gratitude to you, as a gentleman to whose goodness I have been much indebted; of my

* John, fifteenth Earl, was third son of the thirteenth Earl. He was born in 1750; served with the 14th Dragoons; afterwards took orders in the Church of England; married (1785) Lady Isabella Erskine, daughter of the tenth Earl of Buchan; died at Coates, September 1796. With his death the earldom of Glencairn became extinct; the estate and mansion of Finlayston devolved on Robert Graham of Gartmore.

respect for you, as a patriot who, in a venal, sliding age, stands forth the champion of the liberties of my country; and of my veneration for you, as a man whose benevolence of heart does honor to human nature.

There *was* a time, Sir, when I was your dependant; this language, *then*, would have been like the vile incense of flattery—I could not have used it. Now that that connexion is at an end, do me the honor to accept of this *honest* tribute of respect* from, Sir, your much-indebted, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

TO ROBERT RIDDEL, ESQ. OF GLENRIDDEL.

DUMFRIES, *March* 1793.

When you and I, my dear Sir, have passed that bourne whence no traveller returns, should these volumes survive us, I wish the future reader of this page to be informed that they are the pledge of Friendship, ardent and grateful on my part as it was kind and generous on yours. That Enjoyment may mark your days and Pleasure number your years is the earnest prayer of, my dear Sir, Your much-indebted Friend,

THE AUTHOR.

TO MRS GRAHAM OF FINTRY.

DUMFRIES, *March* 1793.

It is probable, Madam, that this page may be read when the hand that now writes it shall be mouldering in the dust: may it then bear witness that I present you these volumes as a tribute of gratitude, on my part ardent and sincere as your and Mr Graham's goodness to me has been generous and noble! May every child of yours, in the hour of need, find such a friend as I shall teach every child of mine that their father found in you!

ROBT. BURNS.

TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQUIRE, DRUMLANRIG.

Will Mr M'Murdo do me the favor to accept of these Volumes: a trifling but sincere mark of the very high respect I bear for his worth as a Man, his manners as a Gentleman and his kindness as a friend? However inferior, now or afterwards, I may rank as a Poet, one honest virtue, to which few Poets can pretend, I trust I shall ever claim as mine —to no man, whatever his station in life or his power to serve me, have I ever paid a Compliment at the expense of TRUTH. THE AUTHOR.†

* This letter shows that Burns had become reconciled to his former landlord.

† The copy presented to M'Murdo is now in the library of Mr A. C. Lamb, Dundee.

TO MR THOMAS WHITE, TEACHER, DUMFRIES ACADEMY.*

April 1795.

Mr White will accept of this Book as a mark of the most sincere Friendship from a man who has ever had too much respect for his Friends and too much contempt for his enemies to flatter either the one or the other. THE AUTHOR.

Probably also a copy was forwarded to the 'lovely Davies.' This may be inferred from a letter written by her from France.

MISS DAVIES TO ROBERT BURNS.

SIR—How can I return you thanks for one favour, when I mean to solicit another?—which is, that you will be so indulgent as to send me a copy of the song you shewed to me at Woodley Park—copied by your own hand, to render it more valuable. I might get it from the Collection,† but that is not what I wish; as you flattered me by saying that you had some faint idea of my insignificant person when you wrote it. You will laugh at my credulity, as it might have been written on one more worthy of the encomiums you have bestowed in it upon the person you had in view. If this is the case, I still think it has so much merit and simplicity in it and the thoughts altogether so new, that I cannot help admiring it.

And now give me leave to thank you for the favours I this morning received by Mr Gordon, which I shall carefully keep in remembrance, as a flattering proof of your attention that can never be obliterated from the mind of D. D. DAVIES.

FONTAINEBLEAU, *March* 14, 1793.

GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 2*nd April* 1793.

I will not recognise the title you give yourself, 'the Prince of *indolent* correspondents;' but if the adjective were taken away, I think the title would fit you exactly. It gives me pleasure to find you can furnish

* Thomas White, who was a native of Hexham, in Northumberland, died in 1825, at the age of sixty-seven. On his tombstone in St Michael's Churchyard, Dumfries, he is described as 'a profound and original mathematician, who taught in the Dumfries Academy forty years, and instructed hundreds who revere his memory.'

† Either 'The bonie wee thing' (Song 341, Johnson's *Museum*) or 'Lovely Davies' (Song 349, Johnson's *Museum*). See *ante*, pp. 281–283.

anecdotes with respect to most of the songs; these will be a literary curiosity.

I now send you my list of songs, which I believe will be found nearly complete. I have put down the first lines of all the English songs which I propose giving, in addition to the Scotch verses. If any others occur to you, better adapted to the character of the airs, pray mention them, when you favour me with your strictures upon everything else relating to the work.

Pleyel has lately sent me a number of the songs, with his symphonies and accompaniments added to them. I wish you were here, that I might serve up some of them to you with your own verses, by way of dessert after dinner. There is so much delightful fancy in the symphonies and such a delicate simplicity in the accompaniments: they are indeed beyond all praise.

I am very much pleased with the several last productions of your muse: your 'Lord Gregory,' in my estimation, is more interesting than Peter's, beautiful as his is. Your 'Here awa, Willie' must undergo some alterations to suit the air. Mr Erskine and I have been conning it over: he will suggest what is necessary to make them a fit match.*

The gentleman I have mentioned, whose fine taste you are no stranger to, is so well pleased, both with the musical and poetical part of our work, that he has volunteered his assistance and has already written four songs for it, which, by his own desire, I send for your perusal. I am, &c.

G. THOMSON.

Burns adopted some of the suggested alterations, and rejected others. His final version was this:

* 'Wandering Willie,' as altered by Erskine and Thomson:

Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Here awa, there awa, haud awa hame,
Come to my bosom, my ain only dearie,
Tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

Winter winds blew loud and cauld at our parting,
Fears for my Willie brought tears in my ee,
Welcome now simmer, and welcome my Willie,
As simmer to nature, so Willie to me.

Rest, ye wild storms, in the cave o' your slumbers,
How your dread howling a lover alarms!
Blow soft, ye breezes! roll gently, ye billows!
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

But oh, if he's faithless, and minds na his Nannie,
Flow still between us, thou dark-heaving main!
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
While, dying, I think that my Willie's my ain.

Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Here awa, there awa, haud awa hame; make for home
Come to my bosom, my ain only dearie,
Tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

Winter winds blew loud and cauld at our parting,
Fears for my Willie brought tears to my e'e;
Welcome now Simmer, and welcome my Willie—
The Simmer to Nature, my Willie to me.

Rest, ye wild storms, in the cave of your slumbers!
How your dread howling a lover alarms!
Wauken, ye breezes! row gently, ye billows!
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms!

But oh, if he's faithless and minds na his Nannie,
Flow still between us, thou wide-roaring main!
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
But, dying, believe that my Willie's my ain.*

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

7th April 1793.

Thank you, my dear Sir, for your packet. You cannot imagine how much this business of composing for your publication has added to my enjoyments. What with my early attachment to ballads, your book, &c., ballad-making is now as completely my hobby-horse as ever fortification was Uncle Toby's; so I'll e'en canter it away till I come to the limit of my race (God grant that I may take the right side of the winning post!); and then, cheerfully looking back on the honest folks with whom I have been happy, I shall say or sing 'Sae merry as we a' hae been' and,

* 'Several of the alterations seem to be of little importance in themselves, and were adopted, it may be presumed, for the sake of suiting the words better to the music. The Homeric epithet for the sea, *dark-heaving*, suggested by Mr Erskine, is in itself more beautiful, as well perhaps as more sublime, than *wide-roaring*, which he has retained; but as it is only applicable to a placid state of the sea, or, at most, to the swell left on its surface after the storm is over, it gives a picture of that element not so well adapted to the ideas of eternal separation, which the fair mourner is supposed to imprecate. From the original song of "Here awa, Willie," Burns has borrowed nothing but the second line and part of the first.'—CURRIE.

raising my last looks to the whole human race, the last words of the voice of Coila* shall be 'Good night and joy be wi' you a'!' So much for my last words; now for a few present remarks, as they have occurred at random on looking over your list.

The first two lines of 'The last time I came o'er the moor,' and several other lines in it, are beautiful; but, in my opinion—pardon me, revered shade of Ramsay!—the song is unworthy of the divine air. I shall try to *make* or *mend*. 'For ever, Fortune, wilt thou prove' is a charming song, but 'Logan Burn and Logan Braes' is sweetly susceptible of rural imagery: I'll try that likewise, and if I succeed, the other song may class among the English ones. I remember two ending lines of a verse in some of the old songs of 'Logan Water' (for I know a good many different ones) which I think pretty.

Now my dear lad maun face his faes, must
Far, far frae me and Logan Braes.

'My Patie is a lover gay' is unequal. 'His mind is never muddy' is a muddy expression indeed.

Then I'll resign and marry Pate,
And syne my cockernony, &c. then—snood

This is surely far unworthy of Ramsay or of your book. My song 'Rigs o' Barley,' to the same tune, does not altogether please me, but if I can mend it I will submit it to your consideration. I need not here repeat that I leave you, without the smallest partiality or constraint, to reject or approve anything of mine.

'The Lass o' Patie's Mill' is one of Ramsay's best songs, but there is one loose sentiment in it which my much-valued friend Mr Erskine, who has so well improved 'Down the burn, Davie, lad,' will take into his critical care and keeping. In Sir J. Sinclair's statistical volumes are two claims, one, I think, from Aberdeenshire, and the other from Ayrshire, for the honor of this song. The following anecdote which I had from the present Sir William Cunningham of Robertland, who had it of the late John, Earl of Loudon, I can, on such authorities, believe:—Allan Ramsay was residing at Loudon Castle with the then Earl, father to Earl John, and one forenoon, riding or walking out together, his Lordship and Allan passed a sweet, romantic spot on Irvine water, called Patie's Mill, where a bonie lass was 'tedding hay, bareheaded on the green.' My Lord observed to Allan that it would be a fine theme for a song. Ramsay took the hint and, lingering behind, he composed the first sketch of it, which he produced at dinner.

'The yellow-haired Laddie' deserves the best verses that were ever

* Burns here calls himself the 'Voice of Coila,' in imitation of Ossian, who denominates himself the 'Voice of Cona.' 'Sae Merry as we a' hae been!' and 'Good night and joy be wi' you a'!' are the names of two Scottish tunes.—CURRIE.

composed, but I dare not venture on it. The verses you intend, though good, are not quite worthy of it.

'I wish I were where Helen lies:' The only tolerable set of this song that I know is in Pinkerton's collection.

'One day I heard Mary say' is a fine song, but for consistency's sake alter the name 'Adonis.' Was there ever such banns published as a purpose of marriage between *Adonis* and *Mary?* These Greek and Roman pastoral appellations have a flat, insipid effect in a Scots song. I agree with you that my song 'There's nought but care on every hand' is much superior to 'Poortith cauld.' The original song 'The Mill, Mill O' though excellent, is, on account of delicacy, inadmissible; still, I like the title and think a Scots song would suit the notes best; and let your chosen song, which is very pretty, follow as an English set.

Though I give Johnson one edition of my songs, that does not give away the copyright, so you may take 'Thou lingering star, with less'ning ray,' to the tune of 'Hughie Graham,' or other songs of mine. 'Ye gallants bright, I rede you right,' &c., is my composition.

'Banks of the Dee' is, you know, literally 'Langolee' to slow time. The song is well enough, but has some false imagery in it, for instance:

And sweetly the *nightingale* sang from the *tree.*

In the first place, the nightingale sings in a low bush, but never from a tree; and in the second place, there never was a nightingale seen or heard on the banks of the Dee nor the banks of any other river in Scotland. Exotic rural imagery is always comparatively flat. If I could hit on another stanza equal to 'The small birds rejoice,' &c., I do myself honestly avow that I think it a superior song.*

'John Anderson, my jo:' the song to this tune in Johnson's *Museum* is my composition, and I think it not my worst; if it suit you, take it and welcome. Your collection of sentimental and pathetic songs is, in my opinion, very complete; but not so your comic ones. Where are 'Tullochgorum,' 'Lumps o' pudding,' 'Tibbie Fowler,' 'Up and waur them a', Willie,' and several others, which, in my humble opinion, are well worth preservation? There is also one sentimental song of mine (the first in the fourth volume of the *Museum*) which was never known out of the immediate neighbourhood, until I got it taken down from a country-girl's singing. It is called 'Craigieburn Wood' and, in the opinion of Mr Clarke, is one of our sweetest Scots songs. He is quite an enthusiast about it; and I would take his taste in Scots music against the taste of most connoisseurs.

You are quite right in inserting the last five in your list, though they certainly are Irish. 'Shepherds, I have lost my love' is to me a heavenly air—what would you think of a set of Scots verses to it? I have made one, a good while ago, which I think is the best love song I ever com-

* Burns had already produced a second stanza of 'The Chevalier's Lament' (see Vol. II., pp. 327, 328): he was evidently not pleased with it.

posed in my life, but in its original state is not quite a lady's song.* I enclose the original, which please present with my best compliments to Mr Erskine, and I also enclose an *altered*, not *amended*, copy for you, if you choose to set the tune to it and let the Irish verses follow.

You shall hear from me again and have your songs. Mr Erskine's songs are all pretty, but his 'Lone Vale' is divine. I have one criticism to make on a line in his song to 'I wish my love were in a mire,' but more of this when I return your parcel. Yours, R. B.

Let me know just how you like these random hints. R. B.

Burns was not a silent observer of the war that was being carried on in France. General Dumouriez, after a series of victories, deserted the army of the Republic on April 5, 1793, and was only prevented by accident from betraying his troops into the hands of the enemy. Some one expressing pleasure at the event in Burns's presence, he chanted almost extempore the following verses in imitation and to the tune of 'Robin Adair:'

ON GENERAL DUMOURIEZ' DESERTION FROM THE FRENCH REPUBLICAN ARMY.

You 're welcome to Despots, Dumouriez;
You 're welcome to Despots, Dumouriez;
How does Dampierre do?
Aye, and Beurnonville too? †
Why did they not come along with you, Dumouriez?

I will fight France with you, Dumouriez;
I will fight France with you, Dumouriez;
I will fight France with you,
I will take my chance with you,
By my soul, I 'll dance a dance with you, Dumouriez.

Then let us fight about, Dumouriez;
Then let us fight about, Dumouriez;

* 'Yestreen I had a pint o' wine:' see Vol. III., p. 171. Thomson did not include it in his *Collection*.

† Dampierre (b. 1756, d. 1793) was one of Dumouriez' (b. 1739, d. 1823 in England) generals, whom he had expected to desert along with him. Beurnonville (b. 1752, d. 1821) was an emissary of the Convention, and Dumouriez had similar hopes of him, which, however, were disappointed. He lived to figure in the crisis of the Restoration in 1814.

Then let us fight about
Till freedom's spark be out,
Then we 'll be d—mned, no doubt, Dumouriez.*

As will be afterwards seen, this was not the last of the compositions in which Burns expressed ardent sympathy with the French and hatred of the powers banded for the suppression of the Republic. Nor could he always keep his tongue from betraying the sentiments of his heart. Thus, for instance, at a private dinner-party, after the health of Pitt had been drunk, he is said to have called for 'a bumper to the health of a much better man —General Washington.'

We now come to a letter which is very remarkable as containing a very full exposition of his political creed, which Burns wrote to Mr Erskine of Mar, with reference to the late animadversions on his conduct by the Excise Board. Mr Erskine †—grandson of the rebel earl of 1715, whose title he recovered before his death —was a zealous Whig. Like other wealthy men in his party, he thought himself bound to do all in his power to compensate for the severity with which the government was treating some of the humbler constitutional reformers. Having heard that Burns was dismissed from his situation in the Excise, he wrote to Riddel of Glenriddel, who had also identified himself with the Reforming party, offering to head a subscription in the poet's behalf. Riddel communicated part of the letter to Burns, who consequently addressed Erskine as follows:

TO JOHN FRANCIS ERSKINE, ESQ., OF MAR.

[In the year 1792-93, when Royalist and Jacobin had set all Britain by the ears, because I unguardedly, rather under the temptation of being witty than disaffected, had declared my sentiments in favor of

* How closely Burns parodied the song which suggested his own poem may be gathered from the opening verse:

You're welcome to Paxton, Robin Adair;
You're welcome to Paxton, Robin Adair;
How does Luke Gardner do? ay, and John Mack'ril too?
O why did they not come with you, Robin Adair?

† John Francis Erskine, 7th Earl of Mar and 12th Lord Erskine, born 1741; served with the 9th Dragoons; quitted the army, 1770; succeeded to the estate of Alloa on the death of his mother, 1776; died 1825.

Parliamentary Reform, in the manner of that time, I was accused to the Board of Excise of being a Republican; and was very near being turned adrift in the wide world on that account. Mr Erskine of Mar, *a gentleman indeed*, wrote to my friend Glenriddel to know if I was really out of place on account of my Political principles, and if so, he proposed a subscription among the friends of Liberty for me, which he offered to head, that I might be no pecuniary loser by my political Integrity. This was the more generous as I had not the honor of being known to Mr Erskine. I wrote him as follows.—*R. B., in Glenriddel MS.*]

DUMFRIES, 13*th April* 1793.

SIR,—Degenerate as human nature is said to be—and in many instances worthless and unprincipled it certainly is—still there are bright examples to the contrary: examples that, even in the eyes of superior beings, must shed a lustre on the name of Man.

Such an example have I now before me, when you, Sir, came forward to patronise and befriend a distant, obscure stranger, merely because poverty had made him helpless and his British hardihood of mind had provoked the arbitrary wantonness of power. My much-esteemed friend, Mr Riddel of Glenriddel, has just read me a paragraph of a letter he had from you. Accept, Sir, of the silent throb of gratitude, for words would but mock the emotions of my soul.

You have been misinformed as to my final dismission from the Excise; I am still in the service. Indeed, but for the exertions of a gentleman who must be known to you, Mr Graham of Fintry, a gentleman who has ever been my warm and generous friend, I had, without so much as a hearing or the slightest previous intimation, been turned adrift, with my helpless family, to all the horrors of want. Had I had any other resource, probably I might have saved them the trouble of a dismissal; but the little money I gained by my publication is, almost every guinea, embarked, to save from ruin an only brother who, though one of the worthiest, is by no means one of the most fortunate of men.

In my defence to their accusations, I said that whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain I abjured the idea: That a CONSTITUTION which, in its original principles, experience had proved to be every way fitted for our happiness in society, it would be insanity to sacrifice to an untried visionary theory:—That, in consideration of my being situated in a department, however humble, immediately in the hands of people in power, I had forborne taking any active part, either personally or as an author, in the present business of REFORM:—but that, where I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature which boded no good to our glorious CONSTITUTION; and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended. Some such sentiments as these I stated in a letter to my generous patron, Mr Graham, which he laid before the Board at large, where, it seems, my last remark gave great offence; and one of our

supervisors-general, a Mr Corbet, was instructed to inquire on the spot into my conduct and to document me,—'that my business was to act, *not to think*; and that whatever might be men or measures, it was for me to be *silent* and *obedient*.'

Mr Corbet was likewise my steady friend: so between Mr Graham and him I have been partly forgiven; only, I understand that all hopes of my getting officially forward are blasted.

Now, Sir, to the business in which I would more immediately interest you. The partiality of my COUNTRYMEN has brought me forward as a man of genius and has given me a character to support. In the POET I have avowed manly and independent sentiments which I trust will be found in the MAN. Reasons of no less weight than the support of a wife and family have pointed out as the eligible, and, situated as I was, the only eligible, line of life for me, my present occupation. Still, my honest fame is my dearest concern; and a thousand times have I trembled at the idea of those *degrading* epithets that malice or misrepresentation may affix to my name. I have often, in blasting anticipation, listened to some future hackney magazine scribbler, with the heavy malice of savage stupidity, exulting in his hireling paragraphs: 'Burns, notwithstanding the *fanfaronade* of independence to be found in his works and after having been held forth to public view and to public estimation as a man of some genius, yet, quite destitute of resources within himself to support his borrowed dignity, he dwindled into a paltry exciseman and slunk out the rest of his insignificant existence in the meanest of pursuits and among the vilest of mankind.'

In your illustrious hands, Sir, permit me to lodge my disavowal and defiance of these slanderous falsehoods. Burns was a poor man from birth and an exciseman by necessity; but——I *will* say it! the sterling of his honest worth no poverty could debase; and his independent British mind oppression might bend but could not subdue. Have not I, to me, a more precious stake in my Country's welfare than the richest dukedom in it? I have a large family of children, and the prospect of many more. I have three sons who, I see already, have brought into the world souls ill-qualified to inhabit the bodies of SLAVES. Can I look tamely on and see any machination to wrest from them the birthright of my boys—the little independent BRITONS, in whose veins runs my own blood? No! I will not! should my heart's blood stream around my attempt to defend it!

Does any man tell me that my full efforts can be of no service; and that it does not belong to my humble station to meddle with the concerns of a nation? I can tell him that it is on such individuals as I that a nation has to rest, both for the hand of support and the eye of intelligence. The uninform'd MOB may swell a nation's bulk; and the titled, tinsel, courtly throng may be its feathered ornament; but the number of those who are elevated enough in life to reason and to reflect, yet low enough to keep clear of the venal contagion of a court:—these are a nation's strength.

I know not how to apologize for the impertinent length of this epistle; but one small request I must ask of you further — When you have honored this letter with a perusal, please commit it to the flames. BURNS, in whose behalf you have so generously interested yourself, I have here, in his native colours, drawn *as he is;* but should any of the people in whose hands is the very bread he eats get the least knowledge of the picture, *it would ruin the poor* BARD *for ever!*

My poems having just come out in another edition, I beg leave to present you with a copy, as a small mark of that high esteem and ardent gratitude with which I have the honor to be, Sir, Your deeply indebted and ever devoted humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

[*Abridged, by Currie.*]

EDINBURGH, *April* 1793.

I rejoice to find, my dear Sir, that ballad-making continues to be your hobby-horse. Great pity 'twould be were it otherwise! I hope you will amble it away for many a year and 'witch the world with noble horsemanship.'

I know there are a good many lively songs of merit that I have not put down in the list sent you, but I have them all in my eye. [Inclosed I send you a Copy of your 'Wandering Willie' as Mr Erskine has altered it. The song is still yours in all the essential parts: will you permit the alterations,* and send it back to me?] 'My Patie is a lover gay,' though a little unequal, is a natural and pleasing song; and I humbly think we ought not to displace or alter it, except the last stanza. I am &c., G. THOMSON.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

April 1793.

I have yours, my dear Sir, this moment: I shall answer it and your former letter, in my desultory way of saying whatever comes uppermost. I am decidedly against setting 'The gloomy night is gathering fast' to the air 'My Nannie, O.' Musical expression is, as you said in one of your late letters, very ambiguous; but, whatever a few cognoscenti may think, you will find that eight out of ten of your Scots subscribers would prefer, for that air, my own 'My Nannie, O,' though an inferior composition to 'The gloomy night,' &c. Besides, 'The Banks of Ayr' has been set by a Mr Dasti to an original melody, and, being a favorite

* See pp. 407, 408.

song with Sutherland's company of strolling comedians, it is a well-known, popular air over the west and south of Scotland.

That business of many of our tunes wanting, at the beginning, what Fiddlers call a starting-note is often a rub to us poor Rhymers.

> There 's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
> That wander through the blooming heather,

you may alter to

> Braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
> They rove amang the blooming heather.

My song 'Here awa, there awa,' as amended by Mr Erskine, I entirely approve of and return you. The 'Yellow-hair'd laddie' I would dispose of thus: I would set the air to the oldest of the songs of that tune:

> The yellow-hair'd laddie sat on yon burn-brae,

and place in letter-press after it, as an English set,

> In April when primroses paint the sweet plain.

Give me leave to criticise your taste in the only thing in which it is, in my opinion, reprehensible. You know I ought to know something of my own trade. Of pathos, sentiment and point you are a complete judge; but there is a quality more necessary than either in a song, and which is the very essence of a ballad,—I mean simplicity: now, if I mistake not, this last feature you are a little apt to sacrifice to the foregoing.

Ramsay, like every other poet, has not been always equally happy in his pieces; still I cannot approve of taking such liberties with an author as Mr Walker has done with 'The last time I came o'er the moor.' Let the poet, if he chooses, take up the idea of another and work it into a piece of his own; but to mangle the works of the poor bard whose tuneful tongue is now mute for ever in the dark and narrow house; by Heaven, 'twould be sacrilege! I grant that Mr Walker's version is an improvement; but I know Mr Walker well and esteem him much; let him mend the song as a Highlander mended his gun: he gave it a new stock, a new lock and a new barrel.

I do not, by this, object to leaving out improper stanzas, where that can be done without spoiling the whole. One stanza in 'The Lass o' Patie's Mill' must be left out: the song will be nothing worse for it. I am not sure if we can take the same liberty with 'Corn rigs are bonie:' perhaps it might want the last stanza and be the better for it. I shall be extremely sorry if you set any other song to the air 'She rose and loot me in' except the song of that title. It would be cruel to spoil the allusion in poor, unfortunate M'Donald's pretty ode.

Could you spare me for a while 'My lodging is on the cold ground?' —I mean, could you defer it until the latest period of your publication;

and I will try to make a new song to it. I would be happy to be favored with a list of the twenty-five you mean to publish first. Remember that on these will, in a great measure, depend the fate of your work with the public: for that reason it will be necessary to select and arrange them with double circumspection. 'Cauld Kail in Aberdeen' you must leave with me yet a while. I have vowed to have a song to that air on the lady whom I attempted to celebrate in the verses 'Poortith cauld and restless love.' At any rate, my other song, 'Green grow the Rashes,' will never suit. The song is current in Scotland under the old title and to the merry old tune of that name, which of course would mar the progress of your song to celebrity. *Your book will be the standard of Scots songs for the future:* let this idea ever keep your judgment on the alarm.

I send you a song on a celebrated fashionable toast in this country, to suit 'Bonie Dundee.' I send you also a ballad to 'The Mill, Mill O.'

YOUNG JESSIE.

TUNE—*Bonie Dundee.*

True-hearted was he, the sad swain o' the Yarrow,
And fair are the maids on the banks of the Ayr;
But by the sweet side o' the Nith's winding river
Are lovers as faithful and maidens as fair:
To equal young Jessie seek Scotland* all over;
To equal young Jessie you seek it in vain:
Grace, beauty and elegance fetter her lover,
And maidenly modesty fixes the chain.

Fresh is the rose in the gay, dewy morning,
And sweet is the lily, at evening close;
But in the fair presence o' lovely young JESSIE,
Unseen is the lily, unheeded the rose:
Love sits in her smile, a wizard ensnaring;
Enthron'd in her een he delivers his law:
And still to her charms SHE alone is a stranger;
Her modest demeanor's the jewel of a'.†

* Burns had written 'Scotia:' the alteration was Thomson's.

† In this song Burns embodied a compliment to Jessie Staig, second daughter of the Provost of Dumfries, and subsequently the wife of Major William Miller, one of the sons of the poet's former landlord. Mrs Miller must have been at this time very young, for her monument in Dumfries churchyard states that she died in March 1801, at the early age of twenty-six.

These verses suit the tune exactly as it is in the *Museum*. There is a syllable wanting at the beginning of the first line of the second stanza; but I suppose it will make little odds. There is so little of the Scots language in the composition that the mere English singer will find no difficulty in the song.

THE SOLDIER'S RETURN.*

AIR—*The Mill, Mill O.*

When wild war's deadly blast was blawn,
And gentle peace returning,
Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning;†
I left the lines and tented field
Where lang I 'd been a lodger,
My humble knapsack a' my wealth,
A poor but honest sodger. soldier

A leal, light heart was in my breast, loyal
My hand unstain'd wi' plunder;
And for fair Scotia, hame again,
I cheery on did wander:
I thought upon the banks o' Coil;
I thought upon my Nancy;
I thought upon the witching smile
That caught my youthful fancy.

At length I reach'd the bonie glen
Where early life I sported;
I pass'd the mill and trysting thorn meeting
Where Nancy aft I courted:

* Burns, I have been informed, was one summer evening at the inn at Brownhill with a couple of friends, when a poor wayworn soldier passed the window: of a sudden, it struck the poet to call him in and get the story of his adventures; after listening to which, he all at once fell into one of these fits of abstraction not unusual with him. He was lifted to the region where he had his 'garland and singing robes about him,' and the result was the admirable song which he sent you for 'The Mill, Mill O!'—*Correspondent of George Thomson.* Mill of Mannoch, beautifully situated on the Coyle, near Coylton Kirk, is supposed to have been the spot where the poet imagined the rencontre of the soldier and his sweetheart to take place.

† Variation (see note, p. 427)—

And eyes again with pleasure beamed
That had been bleared with mourning.

C. Martin Hardie, R.S.A.

The Soldier's Return.

Wha spied I but my ain dear maid,
Down by her mother's dwelling!
And turn'd me round to hide the flood
That in my e'en was swelling.

Wi' alter'd voice, quoth I 'Sweet lass,
Sweet as yon hawthorn's blossom,
O! happy, happy may he be
That 's dearest to thy bosom:
My purse is light, I 've far to gang, go
And fain wad be thy lodger:
I 've serv'd my king and country lang—
Take pity on a sodger.'

Sae wistfully she gaz'd on me
And lovelier was than ever;
Quo' she 'A sodger ance I lo'ed,
Forget him shall I never:
Our humble cot and hamely fare
Ye freely shall partake it;
That gallant badge—the dear cockade,
Ye 're welcome for the sake o' 't.'

She gaz'd—she redden'd like a rose—
Syne pale like ony lily Then
She sank within my arms, and cried
'Art thou my ain dear Willie?'
'By Him who made yon sun and sky,
By whom true love 's regarded!
I am the man; and thus may still
True lovers be rewarded!

'The wars are o'er, and I 'm come hame
And find thee still true-hearted;
Tho' poor in gear, we 're rich in love, goods
And mair we'se ne'er be parted.' we shall
Quo' she 'My grandsire left me gowd, gold
A mailen plenish'd fairly; farm
And come, my faithfu' sodger lad,
Thou 'rt welcome to it dearly.'

For gold the merchant ploughs the main,
The farmer ploughs the manor;
But glory is the sodger's prize,
The sodger's wealth is honor:
The brave poor sodger ne'er despise,
Nor count him as a stranger;
Remember he 's his country's stay
In day and hour of danger.

'The last time I came o'er the moor' I would fain attempt to make a Scots song for, and let Ramsay's be the English set. You shall hear from me soon. When you go to London on this business, can you come by Dumfries? I have still several MS. Scots airs by me, which I have picked up mostly from the singing of country lasses. They please me vastly; but your learned lugs [ears] would perhaps be displeased with that very feature for which I like them. I call them simple; you would pronounce them silly. Do you know a fine air called 'Jackie Hume's Lament?' I have a song of considerable merit to that air, beginning 'O ken ye what Meg o' the mill has gotten?' I'll enclose you both the song and the tune, as I had them ready to send to Johnson's *Museum*. I send you likewise, to me, a beautiful little air, which I had taken down from *viva voce*. On the other page I will give you a stanza or two of the ballad to it:

SONG.—BONIE JEAN.*

There was a lass and she was fair,
At Kirk and Market to be seen:
When a' the fairest maids were met,
The fairest maid was bonie Jean.

And ay she wrought her country wark,
And ay she sang sae merrilie:
The blythest bird upon the bush
Had ne'er a lighter heart than she.

But hawks will rob the tender joys
That bless the little lintwhite's nest; linnet
And frost will blight the fairest flowers;
And love will break the soundest rest.

. . . .

* The finished song was forwarded to Thomson in July following. See pp. 432-434.

MEG O' THE MILL.

[FIRST VERSION.]

AIR—*Jackie Hume's Lament.*

O ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?
An' ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?
She 's gotten a coof wi' a claute o' siller — fool—hoard
And broken the heart of the barley Miller.

The Miller was strappin, the Miller was ruddy,
A heart like a lord and a hue like a lady;
The laird was a widdifu', bleerit knurl:*
She 's left the gude fellow and ta'en the churl.

The Miller he hecht her a heart leal and loving, — promised—loyal
The laird did address her wi' matter mair moving:
A fine pacing-horse wi' a clear chainèd bridle,
A whip by her side and a bonie side-saddle.

O wae on the siller—it is sae prevalin'!
And wae on the love that is fixed on a mailen! — farm
A tocher 's nae word in a true lover's parl, — dowry—talk
But gie me my love—and a fig for the warl!† — world

I know these songs are not to have the luck to please you; else you might be welcome to them. Preserve them carefully and return them to me, as I have no other copy. Adieu. R. B.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

THE LAST TIME I CAME O'ER THE MOOR.

April 1793.

The last time I came o'er the moor,
And left Maria's dwelling,
What throes, what tortures passing cure,
Were in my bosom swelling:

* Widdifu'= One who deserves to hang in a widdie or halter; bleerit knurl = blear-eyed dwarf.

† The poet had retouched an old song of this name for Johnson's *Museum* in 1788. It appeared in the sixth volume, as 'written for this work by Robert Burns,' but is too poor a thing to have been written by him. See Vol. IV., 'Songs Improved.'

Condemned to see my rival's reign,
While I in secret languish;
To feel a fire in every vein,
Yet dare not speak my anguish.

Love's veriest wretch, despairing, I
Fain, fain my crime would cover:
The unweeting groan, the bursting sigh, unwitting
Betray the guilty lover.
I know my doom must be despair:
Thou wilt nor canst relieve me;
But, O Maria, hear my prayer,
For pity's sake, forgive me!

The music of thy tongue I heard,
Nor wist while it enslaved me;
I saw thine eyes, yet nothing feared,
Till fears no more had saved me.
The unwary sailor thus, aghast,
The wheeling torrent viewing,
Mid circling horrors yields at last
In overwhelming ruin!

My dear Sir—I had scarcely put my last letter into the post-office when I took up the subject of 'The last time I came o'er the moor,' and ere I slept drew the outlines of the foregoing. How far I have succeeded I leave, as I do every other I send, to you to decide on. I own my vanity is flattered when you give my works a place in your elegant and superb collection; but to be of service to that work is my first wish. As I have often told you, I do not in a single instance wish you, out of compliment to me, to insert anything of mine. If you can send me, as I said in my last hotch-potch epistle, a list of your first twenty-five songs, I will add the authors' names and return you the list. One hint only let me give you: where you have, as in 'Katharine Ogie,' set another song to the air, it will be proper also to prefix the old name of the tune, thus: 'Highland Mary.—Tune, Katharine Ogie.' Another hint you will forgive: whatever Mr Pleyel does, let him not alter one iota of the original Scots air—I mean in the song department; our friend Clarke, than whom you know there is not a better judge of the subject, complains that in the air 'Lea-rig' the accent is altered. But let our national airs preserve their native features. They are, I own, frequently wild and irreducible to the modern rule; but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect. Farewell. R. Burns.

It will be found that Burns afterwards made considerable alterations in the song which he transcribed in this letter. He says distinctly that 'Mary' was the original name of his heroine; but he re-named her 'Maria' in honour of Mrs Riddel,* who was only in a very limited degree, therefore, his 'model' in this instance. In 'the guilty lover' Burns may have sought to represent the hapless condition of the man who has fallen in love with a married woman.

TO MRS RIDDEL.

FRIDAY, NOON [*April* 1793].

. . . I must tell you that all the haberdashers here are on the alarm as to the necessary article of French gloves. You must know that French gloves are contraband goods and expressly forbidden by the laws of this wisely-governed realm of ours. A satirist would say this is the reason why the ladies are so fond of them; but I, who have not one grain of *gall* in my composition, shall allege that it is the patriotism of the dear goddess of man's idolatry that makes them so fond of dress from the land of liberty and equality. . . . I have discovered one haberdasher who, at my request, will clothe your fair hands as they ought to be, to keep them from being profaned by the rude gaze of the gloating eye or (horrid!) by the unhallowed lips of that Satyr man. . . .

So much for this important matter. I have received a long letter from Mr Thomson, who presides over the publication of Scotch music, &c., which I mentioned to you. Would you honor the publication with a song from you? I have just sent him a new song to 'The last time I came o'er the moor;' but I don't know if I have succeeded. I enclose it for your strictures. *Mary* was the name I intended my heroine to bear, but I altered it into your ladyship's, as being infinitely more musical. . . .

R. B.

TO MRS RIDDEL.

[*April* 1793.]

On Monday, my dear Madam, I shall most certainly do myself the honor of waiting on you; whether the Muses will wait on me is, I fear, dubious. Please accept a new song which I have this moment received from Urbani. It is a trifling present: but 'Give all thou can'st.'

R. B.

TO MRS RIDDEL.

[*April* 1793.]

I have often told you, my dear friend, that you had a spice of caprice in your composition; and you have as often disavowed it, even, perhaps,

* The copy of the 1793 edition of his *Poems* which Burns presented to Mrs Riddel is now in the possession of the Earl of Rosebery. It bears this inscription: 'To Mrs Riddel of Woodley Park. *Un gage d'amitié le plus sincère.* The Author.'

while your opinions were, at the moment, irrefragably proving it. Could *any thing* estrange me from a friend such as you? No! To-morrow I shall have the honor of waiting on you.

Farewell, thou first of friends and most accomplished of women, even with all thy little caprices! R. B.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.*

April 26, 1793.†

I am d—nably out of humour, my dear Ainslie, and that is the reason why I take up the pen to *you:* 'tis the nearest way (*probatum est*) to recover my spirits again.

I received your last and was much entertained with it; but I will not at this time, nor at any other time, answer it. Answer a letter! I never could answer a letter in my life! I have written many a letter in return for letters I have received; but then—they were original matter—spurt away! zig, here; zag, there; as if the Devil that, my Grannie (an old woman indeed!) often told me, rode on Will-o'-wisp, or, in her more classic phrase, SPUNKIE, were looking over my elbow. Happy thought that idea has engendered in my head! SPUNKIE—thou shalt henceforth be my symbol, signature and tutelary genius! Like thee, hap-step-and-lowp, here-awa-there-awa, higglety-pigglety, pell-mell, hither-and-yon, ram-stam, happy-go-lucky, up tails-a'-by-the-light-o'-the-moon; has been, is and shall be my progress through the Mosses and Moors of this vile, bleak, barren wilderness of a life of ours.

Come then, my guardian spirit! like thee may I skip away amusing myself by, and at, my own light; and if any opaque-souled lubber of mankind complain that my elfine, lambent, glimmerous wanderings have misled his stupid steps over precipices or into bogs, let the thick-headed Blunderbuss recollect that he is not SPUNKIE:—that

> Spunkie's wanderings could not copied be;
> Amid these perils none durst walk but he.‡

I feel vastly better. I give you joy. . . . I have no doubt but scholarcraft may be caught as a Scotsman catches the itch,—by friction. How else can you account for it: that born blockheads, by mere dint of *handling* books, grow so wise that even they themselves are equally convinced of, and surprised at, their own parts? I once carried this philosophy to that degree that in a knot of country-folks who had a

* Ainslie, it is rather curious to note in this connection, subsequently became an elder of the Church of Scotland, and wrote two religious works: *A Father's Gift to his Children* and *Reasons for the Hope that is in us.* He died in 1838.

† So endorsed by Ainslie.

‡ Compare—

> 'But Shakspeare's magic could not copied be:
> Within that circle none durst walk but he!'
>
> DRYDEN, *The Tempest*, Prologue.

library amongst them and who, to the honor of their good sense, made me factotum in the business, one of our members—a little, wise-looking, squat, upright, jabbering body of a tailor—I advised him, instead of turning over the leaves, *to bind the book on his back*. Johnie took the hint; and as our meetings were every fourth Saturday and Pricklouse having a good Scots mile to walk in coming, and, of course, another in returning, Bodkin was sure to lay his hands on some heavy quarto or ponderous folio with, and under which, wrapt up in his grey plaid, he grew wise as he grew weary, all the way home. He carried this so far, that an old musty Hebrew concordance, which we had in a present from a neighbouring priest, by mere dint of applying it, as doctors do a blistering plaster, between his shoulders, Stitch, in a dozen pilgrimages, acquired as much rational theology as the said priest had done by forty years' perusal of the pages.

Tell me, and tell me truly, what you think of this theory! Yours,

SPUNKIE.

At Whitsunday, 1793,* Burns and his family removed from their flat in the Wee Vennel to a detached house in the Mill-hole Brae or Mill Vennel (now Burns Street), beyond the lower end of High Street. Although the change meant only an increase of rent from £6 or £7 to £10 or £12, yet it betokened a considerable improvement in the circumstances of the family. Their new house† was a neat one of two storeys, containing kitchen, parlour, one or two good bedrooms, and several smaller rooms, useful for the accommodation of a young family. Before it came to be occupied, however, it would seem that the bright views of the future, which possibly led to its being taken, were somewhat overcast, for the first few months of the war had given a general check to trade throughout the nation. Burns contemplated the downward progress of his country at that time with feelings of keen indignation, which occasionally escaped in letters to his more intimate friends:

TO MR PETER HILL.

[DUMFRIES, *May* 1793 (?).]

I would have written you sooner, my dear Friend; but as our Treasurer was out of town until to-day, I did not wish to write except

* Allan Cunningham places this event at Midsummer, 1794, a time of gloom to Burns. The above is ascertained as the true date, by an account for a grate furnished to the new dwelling by George Haugh, blacksmith, amounting, with the fender and other articles, to £1, 7s. 4d.

† The house is now the property of the Trustees of Dumfries Industrial School, which has been built beside it.

I could write to the purpose. To-day, I believe, our Treasurer remits you the cash; on Monday next our committee meet, when you shall have a new order.

I hope and trust that this unlucky blast which has overturned so many (and many worthy characters who, four months ago, little dreaded any such thing) will spare my Friend.

Oh! may the wrath and curse of all mankind haunt and harass those turbulent, unprincipled miscreants who have involved a People in this ruinous business!

I have not a moment more. Blessed be he that blesseth thee and cursed be he that curseth thee! And the wretch whose envious malice would injure thee, may the Giver of every good and perfect gift say unto him—'Thou shalt not prosper!' R. B.

GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, *26th April* 1793.

I heartily thank you, my dear Sir, for your last two letters and the songs which accompanied them. I am always both instructed and entertained by your observations; and the frankness with which you speak out your mind is to me highly agreeable. It is very possible I may not have the true idea of simplicity in composition. I confess there are several songs, of Allan Ramsay's for example, that I think silly enough, which another person, more conversant than I have been with country people, would perhaps call simple and natural. But the lowest scenes of simple nature will not please generally, if copied precisely as they are. The poet, like the painter, must select what will form an agreeable as well as a natural picture. On this subject it were easy to enlarge; but at present suffice it to say that I consider simplicity, rightly understood, as a most essential quality in composition and the ground-work of beauty in all the arts. I will gladly appropriate your most interesting new ballad 'When wild war's deadly blast,' &c. to 'The Mill, Mill O,' as well as the two other songs to their respective airs; but the third and fourth lines of the verse must undergo some little alteration in order to suit the music. Pleyel does not alter a single note of the songs. That would be absurd indeed! With the airs which he introduces into the Sonatas, I allow him to take such liberties as he pleases; but that has nothing to do with the songs. G. T.

P.S.—I wish you would do as you proposed with your 'Rigs o' Barley.' If the loose sentiments are *threshed* out of it, I will find an air for it; but as to this there is no hurry.

Burns's next letter to Thomson was written several weeks later.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[*June* 1793.]

When I tell you, my dear sir, that a friend of mine, in whom I am much interested, has fallen a sacrifice to those accursed times, you will easily allow that it might unhinge me from doing any good among ballads. My own loss, as to pecuniary matters, is trifling; but the total ruin of a much-loved friend is a loss indeed. Pardon my seeming inattention to your last commands.

I cannot alter the disputed lines in 'The Mill, Mill O.'* What you think a defect I esteem as a positive beauty; so you see how doctors differ. I shall now, with as much alacrity as I can muster, go on with your commands.

You know Fraser,† the hautboy-player in Edinburgh; he is here, instructing a band of music for a Fencible Corps quartered in this country. Among many of his airs that please me there is one, well known as a reel, by the name of 'The Quaker's Wife;' and which I remember a grand-aunt of mine used to sing by the name of 'Liggeram cosh, my bonie wee lass.' Mr Fraser plays it slow and with an expression that quite charms me. I got such an enthusiast in it that I made a song for it, which I here subjoin and inclose Fraser's set of the tune. If they hit your fancy, they are at your service; if not, return me the tune and I will put it in Johnson's *Museum*. I think the song is not in my worst manner.

BLYTHE HAE I BEEN ON YON HILL.

TUNE—*Liggeram Cosh.*

Blythe hae I been on yon hill
As the lambs before me;
Careless ilka thought and free, every
As the breeze flew o'er me:
Now nae langer sport and play,
Mirth or sang, can please me;
LESLEY is sae fair and coy,
Care and anguish seize me.

* The lines were the third and fourth:

'Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning.'

As Burns had maintained a long silence, and the first number of Thomson's work was at press, that gentleman ventured to substitute for them in that publication:

'And eyes again with pleasure beamed
That had been bleared with mourning'

—on the face of them, not Burns's—yet inserted without a note of explanation in Thomson's *Collection*.

† Thomas Fraser, oboeist and composer, born at Edinburgh about 1770; died 1825.

Heavy, heavy is the task,
Hopeless love declaring;
Trembling, I dow nocht but glow'r, can—stare
Sighing, dumb despairing!
If she winna ease the thraws will not—throes
In my bosom swelling,
Underneath the grass-green sod
Soon maun be my dwelling. must

I should wish to hear how this pleases you. Yours, R. B.

A copy of this song was sent to the heroine, with a note:

TO MISS LESLEY BAILLIE OF MAYVILLE.

[DUMFRIES, *end of May* 1793.]

MADAM—I have just put the last hand to the enclosed song; and I think that I may say of it, as Nature can say of you—'*There* is a work of mine, finished in my very finest style.'

Among your sighing swains, if there should be one whose ardent sentiment and ingenuous modesty fetter his power of speech in your presence; with that look and attitude so native to your manner and of all others the most bewitching—beauty listening to compassion—put my ballad in the poor fellow's hand, just to give a little breathing to the fervor of his soul.

I have some pretence, Madam, to make you up the theme of my song, as you and I are two downright singularities in human nature. You will probably start at this assertion: but I believe it will be allowed that a woman exquisitely charming, without the least seeming consciousness of it, and a poet who never paid a compliment but where it was justly due, are two of the greatest rarities on earth. I have the honor to be, &c., R. B.

Another was sent

TO MISS DAVIES.*

Happy is the man, Madam, that ever has it in his power to contribute to your enjoyments. *Ah, quelle enviable sorte!* (N.B.—If this is not French, it ought to be so.) If the following Song gives you any entertainment, it more than repays me for composing it. (The singularity of this compliment is that it is true.) It is written on the only toast I have in the world besides yourself—a lovely woman, a Miss Lesley Baillie, of Mayville, in Ayrshire. Why you and she have appeared so lovely in my

* Printed in *The Western Luminary* (Glasgow, No. 19, Saturday, May 9, 1824); here first included in the Works of Burns.

eyes is the Creator's business to answer for; so I am glad the burden is off my shoulders.

By the bye, I am a great deal luckier than most poets. When I sing of Miss Davies or Miss Lesley Baillie, I have only to feign the passion—the charms are real.

That never in your presence may the son of man speak to deceive or hear to betray, is the devout prayer of, Madam, Your devoted bard and humble servant, ROBERT BURNS.

Tuesday Evening.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

25th June 1793.

Have you ever, my dear Sir, felt your bosom ready to burst with indignation on reading, or seeing, how these mighty villains divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate provinces and lay Nations waste, out of the wantonness of ambition or often from still more ignoble passions? In a mood of this kind to-day, I recollected the air of 'Logan Water;' and it occurred to me that its querulous melody probably had its origin from the plaintive indignation of some swelling, suffering heart, fired at the tyrannic strides of some Public Destroyer and overwhelmed with private distress, the consequences of a Country's ruin. If I have done anything at all like justice to my feelings, the following song, composed in three-quarters of an hour's lucubrations in my elbow-chair, ought to have some merit.

LOGAN BRAES.

TUNE—*Logan Water.**

O Logan, sweetly didst thou glide
That day I was my Willie's bride,
And years sin syne hae o'er us run, since then
Like Logan to the simmer sun:
But now thy flowery banks appear
Like drumlie Winter, dark and drear, clouded
While my dear lad maun face his faes must
Far, far frae me and Logan braes.

* The air of 'Logan Water' is old, and there are several old songs to it. Immediately before Burns's time, John Mayne, author of 'The Siller Gun,' wrote a very pleasant song to the air, beginning

'By Logan's streams, that rin sae deep.'

It was published in the *Star* newspaper, May 23, 1789. Burns having heard that song, and supposing it to be an old composition, adopted into his own song a couplet from it which he admired:

'While my dear lad maun face his faes
Far, far frae me and Logan braes.'

Again the merry month o' May
Has made our hills and vallies gay;
The birds rejoice in leafy bowers;
The bees hum round the breathing flowers;
Blythe, Morning lifts his rosy eye;
And Evening's tears are tears of joy:
My soul, delightless, a' surveys,
While Willie 's far frae Logan braes.

Within yon milk-white hawthorn bush,
Amang her nestlings, sits the thrush;
Her faithfu' mate will share her toil
Or wi' his song her cares beguile;
But I, wi' my sweet nurslings here,
Nae mate to help, nae mate to cheer,
Pass widow'd nights and joyless days,
While Willie 's far frae Logan braes.

O wae upon you, Men o' State,
That brethren rouse to deadly hate!
As ye make mony a fond heart mourn,
Sae may it on your heads return!
How can your flinty hearts enjoy
The widow's tear, the orphan's cry!*
But soon may peace bring happy days,
And Willie hame to Logan braes!

Do you know the beautiful little fragment in Wotherspoon's collection of Scots songs?†—

AIR—*Hughie Graham.*

O gin my love were yon red rose
That grows upon the castle wa'!
And I mysell a drap o' dew,
Into her bonny breast to fa'!

* Originally—

'Ye mind na, 'mid your cruel joys,
The widow's tears, the orphan's cries.'

† *Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs, Heroic Ballads, &c.* [Collected by David Herd.] Second Edition. In two volumes. Edinburgh: Printed by John Wotherspoon for James Dickson and Charles Elliot. 1776.

Oh there, beyond expression blest,
I 'd feast on beauty a' the night;
Seal'd on her silk-saft faulds to rest,
Till fley'd awa by Phœbus' light! frightened

This thought is inexpressibly beautiful and quite, so far as I know, original. It is too short for a song, else I would forswear you altogether, except you gave it a place. I have often tried to eke a stanza to it, but in vain.

After balancing myself for a musing five minutes on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair, I produced the following. The verses are far inferior to the foregoing, I frankly confess; but, if worthy of insertion at all, they might be first in place, as every Poet who knows any thing of his trade will husband his best thoughts for a concluding stroke.

O were my love yon Lilac fair,
Wi' purple blossoms to the Spring,
And I, a bird to shelter there
When wearied on my little wing!

How I wad mourn when it was torn
By Autumn wild and Winter rude!
But I wad sing on wanton wing,
When youthfu' May its bloom renew'd.*

Yours ever,

ROBT. BURNS.

GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

Monday, 1*st July* 1793.

I am extremely sorry, my good Sir, that anything should happen to unhinge you. The times are terribly out of tune, and when harmony will be restored Heaven knows!

My first book of songs, just published, will be dispatched to you along with this. Let me be favoured with your opinion of it frankly and freely.

I shall certainly give a place to the song you have written for the 'Quaker's Wife:' it is quite enchanting. Pray will you return the list of songs with such airs added to it as you think ought to be included? The business now rests entirely on myself, the gentlemen who originally agreed to join the speculation having requested to be off. No matter, a loser I cannot be. The superior excellence of the work will create a general demand for it as soon as it is properly known. And were the sale

* Burns offers a choice of words: youthfu'—gallant *or* merry; bloom—leaf.

even slower than it promises to be, I should be somewhat compensated for my labour by the pleasure I shall receive from the music. I cannot express how much I am obliged to you for the exquisite new songs you are sending me; but thanks, my friend, are a poor return for what you have done. As I shall be benefited by the publication, you must suffer me to enclose a small mark of my gratitude * and to repeat it afterwards when I find it convenient. Do not return it, for, by Heaven! if you do, our correspondence is at an end; and though this would be no loss to you, it would mar the publication which, under your auspices, cannot fail to be respectable and interesting. G. T.

Wednesday Morning.

I thank you for your delicate additional verses to the old fragment and for your excellent song to 'Logan Water;' Thomson's truly elegant one will follow for the English singer. Your apostrophe to statesmen is admirable; but I am not sure if it is quite suitable to the supposed gentle character of the fair mourner who speaks it. ['Cruel joys' is a phrase I do not like: could you not alter it?

Adieu, my Dear Sir, GEO. THOMSON.]

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

July 2nd, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR—I have just finished the following ballad and, as I do think it in my best style, I send it to you (you had the tune, with a verse or two of the song, from me a while ago). Mr Clarke, who wrote down the air from Mrs Burns's 'woodnote wild,' is very fond of it and has given it celebrity by teaching it to some young ladies of the first fashion here. If you do not like the air enough to give it a place in your collection, please return me the air—the song you may keep, as I remember it.

BONIE JEAN.

There was a lass, and she was fair,
At kirk and market to be seen:
When a' our fairest maids were met,
The fairest maid was bonie Jean.

And ay she wrought her mammie's wark,
And ay she sang sae merrilie:
The blythest bird upon the bush
Had ne'er a lighter heart than she.

* Five pounds.

But hawks will rob the tender joys
That bless the little lintwhite's nest; linnet
And frost will blight the fairest flowers;
And love will break the soundest rest:

Young Robie was the brawest lad, handsomest
The flower and pride of a' the glen;
And he had owsen, sheep and kye oxen—cows
And wanton naigies nine or ten. horses

He gaed wi' Jeanie to the tryste, fair
He danc'd wi' Jeanie on the down;
And, lang ere witless Jeanie wist,
Her heart was tint, her peace was stown. lost—stolen

As in the bosom of the stream
The moon-beam dwells at dewy e'en,
So trembling, pure, was tender love
Within the breast of bonie Jean.*

And now she works her mammie's wark;
And ay she sighs wi' care and pain;
Yet wist na what her ail might be
Or what wad mak her weel again.

But did na Jeanie's heart loup light, jump
And did na joy blink in her e'e sparkle
As Robie tauld a tale o' love,
Ae e'enin on the lily lea!

The sun was sinking in the west,
The birds sang sweet in ilka grove, every
His cheek to hers he fondly prest,
And whisper'd thus his tale o' love:

'O Jeanie fair, I lo'e thee dear:
O canst thou think to fancy me?
Or wilt thou leave thy mammie's cot
And learn to tent the farms wi' me? care for

* In the original manuscript, our poet asks Mr Thomson if this stanza is not original.—CURRIE.

'At barn or byre thou shalt na drudge, cow-house
Or naething else to trouble thee;
But stray amang the heather-bells
And tent the waving corn wi' me.'

Now what could artless Jeanie do?
She had nae will to say him na:
At length she blush'd a sweet consent,
And love was ay between them twa.

I have some thoughts of inserting in your index, or in my notes, the names of the fair ones, the themes of my songs. I do not mean the name at full; but dashes or asterisks, so as ingenuity may find them out.

[The heroine of the foregoing is Miss M'Murdo, daughter to Mr M'Murdo of Drumlanrig, one of your subscribers. I have not painted her in the rank which she holds in life, but in the dress and character of a cottager.*]

Yours ever, R. B.

Mr M'Murdo at this time resided at or in the immediate neighbourhood of Dumfries, where Mr Clarke was teaching his daughters music.

TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ.

[DUMFRIES, *July* 1793.]

SIR—There is a beautiful, simple little Scots air, which Mr Clarke tells me has the good fortune to meet your approbation; and which he says he has taught to your young ladies, together with the rudiments of a Song which I intended to suit the tune. That Ballad I enclose finished and, in my own opinion, in my best style; and I now beg leave to present to Miss M'Murdo the composition, as I think I have made it worthy, in some degree, of the subject. She I, from the beginning, meant for the Heroine of it.

Sincere respect, Sir, even from those who can bestow nothing else or who are themselves of no consequence as folk of the world—such respect and tribute of the heart is an offering grateful to every mind. You know that it is a tribute I never pay but in the willing ardour of my soul. Kings give Coronets—alas! I can only bestow a Ballad. Still, however, I proudly claim one superiority even over Monarchs: my presents, so far as I am a Poet, are the presents of Genius; and as the gifts of R. Burns, they are the gifts of respectful gratitude to the Worthy. I assure you I am not a little flattered with the idea when I anticipate

* This paragraph appears in Currie's print of this letter: it does not (now) appear in the MS. Miss Jean M'Murdo married a Mr Crawford.

children pointing out in future publications the tributes of respect I have bestowed on their Mothers. The merits of the Scots airs to which many of my Songs are—and more will be—set, give me this pleasing hope.

You, I believe, are a subscriber to that splendid edition of Scots Music in which Pleyel presides over the musical department. In a future number of that Work (the first number is already published) this Ballad will probably appear. I have the honor to be, Sir, your obliged, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

If the foregoing letter was sent to Mr M'Murdo, the necessity for one to his daughter does not appear. The following, however, is copied into the Glenriddel prose volume:

TO MISS M'MURDO.

MADAM—Amid the profusion of complimentary addresses which your age, sex and accomplishments will now bring you, permit me to approach with my *devoirs* which, however deficient may be their consequence in other respects, have the double novelty and merit, in these frivolous, hollow times, of being Poetic and sincere. In the inclosed ballad I have, I think, hit off a few outlines of your portrait. The personal charms, the purity of mind, the ingenious naïveté of heart and manners in my heroine are, I flatter myself, a pretty just likeness of Miss M'Murdo in a Cottage. Every composition of this kind must have a series of Dramatic incident in it, so I have had recourse to my invention to finish the rest of my ballad.

So much from the Poet: now let me add a few wishes which every man who has himself the honour of being a father must breathe, when he sees Female Youth, Beauty and Innocence about to enter into this much-chequered and very precarious world. May you, my young Madam, escape that Frivolity which threatens universally to pervade the minds and manners of Fashionable Life. To pass by the rougher and still more degenerate sex: the mob of fashionable Female Youth, what are they? Are they any thing? They prattle, laugh, sing, dance, finger a lesson or perhaps turn over the pages of a fashionable Novel; but are their minds stored with any information worthy of the noble powers of reason and judgment? or do their hearts glow with sentiment ardent, generous and humane? Were I to poetise on the subject, I would call them the butterflies of the human kind: remarkable only for, and distinguished only by, the idle variety of their gaudy glare, sillily straying from one blossoming weed to another, without a meaning and without an aim, the idiot prey of every pirate of the skies who thinks them worth his while as he wings his way by them, and speedily by wintry time swept to that oblivion whence they might as well never have appeared.

Amid this crowd of Nothings may you, Madam, be Something!—May yours be a Character dignified as Rational and Immortal Being.

A still more formidable plague in life—unfeeling, interested Selfishness—is a contagion too impure to touch you. The selfish drift to bless yourself alone, to build your fame on another's ruin, to look on the child of Misfortune without commiseration or even the victim of Folly without Pity—these, and every other feature of a heart rotten at the core, are what you are totally incapable of.

These wishes, Madam, are of no consequence to You, but to Me they are of the utmost, as they give me an opportunity of declaring with what respect I have the honor to be, &c., &c., R. B.

Another version of this ballad differs so much from the popular one that we give it here:

THERE WAS A LASS AND SHE WAS FAIR.

There was a lass, and she was fair,
At kirk and market to be seen:
When a' our fairest maids were met,
The fairest maid was bonie Jean.

And ay she wrought her country wark,
And ay she sang sae merrilie:
The blythest bird upon the bush
Had ne'er a lighter heart than she.

But hawks will rob the tender joys
That bless the little lintwhite's nest;
And frost will blight the fairest flowers;
And love will break the soundest rest:

Young Robie was the brawest lad
That turn'd the maute in yon toun-en',
And he had owsen, sheep and kye
And wanton naigies nine or ten.

He gaed wi' Jeanie to the tryste,
He danc'd wi' Jeanie on the down;
And, lang ere witless Jeanie wist,
Her heart was tint, her peace was stown.

And as she wrought her country wark,
Her life was nought but care and pain;
Yet kend na what her ail could be
Or what wad ease her heart again.

But did na Jeanie's heart lowp light,
And did na joy blink in her e'e
When Robie tauld a tale o' love,
Ae e'ening, on the lily lea!

While mony a bird sang sweet o' love
And mony a flow'r bloom'd o'er the dale;
His cheek to hers he aft did lay,
And whisper'd thus his tender tale:

'O Jeanie fair, I loe thee dear:
And can'st thou think to fancy me?
And wilt thou leave thy country wark
And learn to turn the maute wi' me?

'Thy handsome foot thou shalt na set
In barn or byre, to trouble thee;
But sit on a cushion and sew at thy seam,
And learn to turn the maute wi' me.'

Now Jeanie wist na what to say:
She had nae will to say him na;
At length she blush'd a kind consent,
And bliss was aye between them twa.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

July 1793.

I assure you, my dear Sir, that you truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. It degrades me in my own eyes. However, to return it would savour of bombast affectation; but, as to any more traffic of that debtor and creditor kind, I swear, by that HONOR which crowns the upright statue of ROBERT BURNS'S INTEGRITY—on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the by-past transaction and from that moment com-

mence entire stranger to you! BURNS'S character for generosity of sentiment and independence of mind will, I trust, long outlive any of his wants which the cold unfeeling orc can supply; at least I shall take care that such a character he shall deserve.

Thank you for my copy. Never did my eyes behold in any musical work such elegance and correctness. Your preface, too, is admirably written, only your partiality to me has made you say too much; however, it will bind me down to double every effort in the future progress of the work. Now for business—must I return you the list? The following are a few remarks on it. I never copy what I write you, so I may be often tautological or perhaps contradictory.

The 'Flowers of the Forest' is charming as a poem and should be, and must be, set to the notes; but though out of rule, the three stanzas beginning

I hae seen the smiling o' Fortune beguiling,

are worthy of a place, were it but to immortalize the author of them, who is an old lady of my acquaintance and at this moment living in Edinburgh. She is a Mrs Cockburn, I forget of what place, but from Roxburghshire.* What a charming apostrophe is

O fickle Fortune, why this cruel sporting,
Why, why torment us—poor sons of a day!

The old ballad, 'I wish I were where Helen lies,' is silly to contemptibility. My alteration in *Johnson* is not much better. Mr Pinkerton in his, what he calls, ancient ballads (many of them notorious, though beautiful enough, forgeries) has the best set. It is full of his own interpolations, but no matter.

In the 'Lea-rig' I have altered my mind as to the first line, and will, if you please, have it as at first—

When o'er the hills the eastern star.

It is much more poetical.

The verses of the 'Bonie Brucket Lassie' are poor. They, I believe, are the production of that odd being, 'Balloon Tytler.'† The air deserves fine verses.

The measure of 'Hughie Graham' will answer exactly to my favorite fragment, 'O, if my Love were yon red rose.' Will the expression suit?

The Jacobite verses 'There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame' are mine, made on the idea suggested by the title of the air. If you object to their sentiments, there is another song of mine (*Museum*, vol. iv., No. 331) which will suit the measure. It is a little irregular in the flow of the lines, but where two short syllables, that is to say, one syllable more than regular feet—if these two syllables fall to the space

* See note, Vol. II., p. 79.

† See note, Vol. II., p. 386.

of one, crotchet time, composed of two different quavers under a slur, it has, I think, no bad effect to divide them. Thus it may flow—

> Yon wild, mossy mountains sae lofty and wide,
> That nurse in their bosom the youth o' the Clyde,
> Where the grouse thro' the heath lead their coveys to feed,
> And the shepherd tents his flock as he pipes on his reed.

After all, perhaps the expression of this air requires something more solemn.

If you look into the *Museum* (vol. iv., No. 311) you will see an altered set of the ballad 'O let me in this ae night.' Apropos, in *Oswald*, under the name of 'Will ye lend me your loom, lass' you will meet with a different set, and perhaps a better one, than in Johnson's *Museum*.

In my next I will suggest to your consideration a few songs which may have escaped your hurried notice. In the mean time, allow me to congratulate you now as a brother of the quill. You have committed your character and fame, which will now be tried for ages to come by the illustrious jury of the SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF TASTE—all whom poesy can please or music charm. Being a bard of nature, I have some pretensions to second-sight; and I am warranted by the spirit to foretell and affirm that your great-great-grandchild will hold up your volumes and say with honest pride 'This so-much-admired selection was the work of my ancestor!'* Yours, R. B.

P.S.—Robert Riddel, Esq., of Glenriddel, subscribed to me for the songs: send him a copy to my care the first opportunity. Walter Riddel, of Woodley Park, is a subscriber for the whole work; but he is at present out of the country. John M'Murdo, Esq., of Drumlanrig, is, I believe, another subscriber for the whole work; and also, I think, Patrick Miller, of Dalswinton: but Mr Clarke, our friend, who is at present teaching in both families—I will write or speak to him about it. However, all your subscribers here are determined to transmit you the full price without the intervention of those harpies, the booksellers.

Do not forget Glenriddel's copy of the songs. R. B.

Burns's persistent determination to accept no pecuniary recompense from Thomson, which is clearly indicated by this letter, has excited much surprise. It has been remarked by Lockhart as the more extraordinary inasmuch as the poet made no scruple about accepting hundreds of pounds from Creech as the profits of his volume of poems. The explanation is simple enough: he deemed an author fully entitled to any profit which might arise from his works published in the ordinary manner. He himself says in a

* Charles Dickens, as has already been noted, married Catherine, daughter of George Hogarth, the musical critic, who had married a daughter of George Thomson: his children are therefore the great-grandchildren of the musician.

letter to Mr Carfrae, dated 1789: 'The profits of the labours of a man of genius are, I hope, as honourable as any profits whatever.' And on this principle he acted as far as ordinary modes of publishing were concerned. Yet he appears to have had at the same time an insuperable aversion to deliberately writing for money.* And this he applied in the cases of Johnson and Thomson. Besides, he regarded these men as amateurs in Scottish music and song like himself, who were taking trouble and undergoing risk for the sake of a cause interesting to all patriotic Scotsmen. In such a business he must write for love, and not for reward, if he was to write at all. It might, it may be said, have occurred to him that Johnson and Thomson stood at least a chance of making some profit by their respective publications. All that can be said on the other hand is that amateurship was truly the basis of both publications; that Johnson's had not proved a source of profit; and that it was quite problematical whether Thomson's turned out differently or no. Burns was in this regard animated by a sentiment highly honourable to him, and in entire keeping with his character. It cost him a severe exercise of self-denial. It will be afterwards seen that his poverty has been exaggerated; yet in July 1793, when he wrote the foregoing letter to Thomson, a few pounds would have been of essential service to him. It will be readily admitted that Burns could never have been comfortable under the burden of even the smallest debt. Yet there is evidence that the trifle (10s.) due to Jackson of the *Dumfries Journal*, for advertising the sale of his stock at Ellisland, was now, after twenty months, still unpaid. It was discharged on the 12th July, probably out of the very money transmitted by Thomson.

* In a brief anonymous memoir of Burns, published in the *Scots Magazine* for January 1797, it is stated that he considered it below him to be an author by profession. 'A friend,' adds the writer, 'knowing his family to be in great want [an exaggeration, certainly], urged the propriety, and even necessity, of publishing a few poems, assuring him of their success, and shewing the advantage that would accrue to his family from it. His answer was: "*No;* if a friend desires me, and if I'm in the mood for it, I'll write a poem, but I'll be d—— if ever I write for money."'

APPENDICES.

No. I.—ADDITIONAL ELLISLAND LETTERS.

THE following three letters have been recovered too late for insertion in their proper places. A portion of the third, to Alexander Cunningham, appears at pp. 70, 71 of this volume. It is now given in its complete form (for the first time in print), from the MS. in the Observatory at Dumfries. The first two, which have never before been included in any edition of Burns, are to another of Burns's intimate Edinburgh friends, William Dunbar. They are the property of Mr R. B. Adam, Buffalo, and at present under the care of Mr Hew Morrison, of the Public Library, Edinburgh.

TO MR WILLIAM DUNBAR, WRITER TO THE SIGNET, ST DAVID STREET, EDINBURGH.

Per favor of Mr Clarke.

ELLISLAND, *near Dumfries, September 25th*, 1788.

MY EVER-DEAR FRIEND—You yourself are to blame for my long ungrateful silence. You wrote me such an excellent letter, at once so marked with Friendship and Genius, that I resolved not to answer it in the usual way, 'at my first leisure hour,' but to watch some favored moment of inspiration and call up my little scattered powers to give you, as well as I could, an adequate return. I waited a moment that never came; so in my plain, dull, ordinary way, accept of my thanks for your letter; your Cowper's *Poems*, the best Poet out of sight since Thomson; and accept of my best wishes for your welfare, and the welfare of Mrs Fordyce and your two little Nieces. I was going to call them two little Angels; but when I consider, though their looks have all that celestial sweetness, guileless Sprightliness and ingenuous Modesty that one would expect in a young Inhabitant of Heaven, a

Seraph newly entered on existence, nay, their air, their manner, their figure (for whatever Milton had, *I* have no idea of a Cherub six feet high), are quite Angelic; yet there is a something, and not a little something neither, about their eyes, as well in the *enchanting* shape and colors of the organs themselves, as in their *fascinating* way of using them—in short, for I hate to dwell on so disagreeable a subject as accusing a fellow-creature, I am positively of opinion that there is more bewitching destructive mischief in one of their GLANCES than in the worst half of 'Satan's invisible world discovered:' now witchcraft can never make a part in the character, at least of a good Angel. I am sorry for the young ladies' sakes that I am forced to bear this witness against them, but however I may deal in fiction, under my Poetic Licence, I sacredly stick to truth in Prose. To say no more on this unlucky business, I give the young Ladies notice that, married man as I am, and consequently out of the field of Danger, still I have so much regard for the welfare of the world I lately left, that I have half a thought of advertising them in Rhyme, to put mankind on their guard against such a dangerous and still *growing* Mischief.

I inclose you a Poem* I have just finished. It is my first Essay in that kind of Poetry; and I ask your Criticisms on it, both how far you think such a species of poetic composition seems to suit my Muse, and what faults you find, or emendations you would propose, in it. I am determined, from this time forth, whatever I may write, to do it leisurely and, to the utmost of my power, correctly. I must caution you, should you think the Poem worth mentioning, to mention it but sparingly; and the gentleman's name to whom it is addressed, not at all. My connection with him is at present very delicate and highly important to myself. I am ever most truly, My dear Sir, Yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

TO THE SAME.

[With lines 'Written in Friars' Carse Hermitage' (both versions).]

[ELLISLAND, *circa February 14th*, 1789.]

In vain do we talk of reason, my dear Sir; we are the offspring of Caprice and the nurslings of Habitude. The most pleasurable part of our existence, the strings that tie heart to heart, are the manufacture of some hitherto undescribed and unknown power within us. The circle of our acquaintance, like a wide horizon, is too large for us to make anything of it. We are amused for a little with the ill-defined distant objects; but our tired eye soon fixes with delighted discrimination on the towering cliffs or the winding river, a hoary ruin or a woody vale, just as that nameless Something within us directs.

I returned from my late hare-brained ramble into life, with two or three attachments of that kind in my bosom; but from my un-

* Manifestly the 'First Epistle to Graham of Fintry.' See Vol. II., pp. 369–372.

couthness when out of my native sphere and my obscurity in that sphere, I am obliged to give most of them up in despair of a mutual return. I often say to myself: why may not a son of Poverty, with an intelligent mind and an independent spirit, make an agreeable Intimate or an entertaining Correspondent? What are all, even the most exalted, advantages to which we can be born, compared with good sense, native taste and amiable dispositions; and what are the richest attainments of Fortune, to Intelligence and Worth?

You made me happy once in the idea that I should enjoy your correspondence in my rustic obscurity, but must I think of you what I never thought of you before—that you are one of the herd of mankind?

I had set so much store by your friendship, that I shall not very easily part with the hope I had fondly indulged of its being one of the permanent enjoyments of my life. In my professional line, too, I want you much. Before an Author gets his Piece finished, he has viewed and reviewed it so often—he has brought it so near the mental eye that it is within the sphere of vision; and he is no longer a judge of its merits. A judicious candid friend is then all he has to trust to; and I had set you down as that friend for me.

The foregoing Poems are of my late productions; and if they will bear your criticism, I should be glad that you would honor them with your strictures. I shall be in Edinburgh for two or three days, very soon, and I hope then to have the pleasure of assuring you in person how sincerely I am, Dear Sir, Your most obedient humble Servant, ROBT. BURNS.

TO MR ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM.

ELLISLAND, *4th May* 1789.

MY DEAR SIR—Your *duty-free* Favor of the 26th April I received two days ago. I will not say I perused it with pleasure: that is the cold compliment of ceremony; I perused it, Sir, with delicious satisfaction. In short, it is such a letter that not you nor your friend, but the Legislature, by express Proviso in their Postage laws, should frank. A letter informed with all the glowing soul of friendship is such an honor to Human nature that they should order it free ingress and egress to and from their bags and mails, as an encouragement and mark of distinction to super-eminent Virtue.

I have just put the last hand to a little Poem which I think will be something to your taste. One morning lately, as I was out pretty early in the fields sowing some grass-seeds, I heard the burst of a shot from a neighbouring Plantation; and presently a poor little wounded hare came crippling by me. You will guess my indignation at the inhuman fellow who could shoot a hare at this season, when they all of them have young

ones; and it gave me no little gloomy satisfaction to see the poor injured creature escape him. Indeed, there is something in all that multiform business of destroying, for our sport, individuals in the animal creation that do not injure us materially, that I could never reconcile to my ideas of native Virtue and eternal Right.

ON SEEING A FELLOW WOUND A HARE WITH A SHOT, APRIL 1789.

Inhuman man! curse on thy barb'rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye!
May never Pity soothe thee with a sigh,
Nor ever Pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go live, poor wand'rer of the wood and field,
The bitter little that of life remains:
No more the thickening brakes or verdant plains
To thee or home or food or pastime yield.

Seek, mangled innocent, some wonted form;
That wonted form, alas! thy dying bed,
The shelt'ring rushes whistling o'er thy head,
The cold earth with thy blood-stain'd bosom warm.

Perhaps a mother's anguish adds its woe;
The playful pair crowd fondly by thy side:
Ah, helpless nurslings, who will now provide
That life a mother only can bestow?

Oft as by winding Nith I, musing, wait
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
And curse the ruthless wretch and mourn thy hapless fate.

Thank you, my dearest Sir, for your concern for me in my contest with the London News-men. Depend on it that I will never deign to reply to *their* Petulance.* The Publisher of the *Star* has been polite. He may find his account in it; though I would scorn to put my name to a Newspaper Poem. One instance, indeed, excepted: I mean your two Stanzas. Had the Lady kept her character, she should have kept my verses; but as she prostituted the one, I no longer made anything of the other; so sent them to Stuart as a bribe, in my earnestness to be cleared from the foul aspersions respecting the D[uchess] of G[ordon].†

Let me know how you like my Poem. I am doubtful whether it

* This affair of the 'London News-men' is treated at pp. 242–247 of this volume.

† The Poet refers to his two stanzas on Miss Stewart, whom Cunningham had unsuccessfully courted. They had appeared in *Stuart's Star*, under his name. See note, Vol. III., p. 59. The verses will appear in the fourth volume of this work.

would not be an improvement to keep out the last stanza but one, altogether.

Cleghorn is a glorious production of the Author of Man. You, He and the noble Colonel of the Crochallan Fencibles, are to me

Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart.

I have a good mind to make verses on you all, to the tune of 'Three gude fallows ayont yon glen.' By the way, do look in on poor Johnson how he comes on. I sent him a list of what *I would chuse* for his third Volume.

Adieu! God bless you! ROBT. BURNS.

In the third volume of *The Complete Works of Robert Burns* (Philadelphia, 1886) the following letter appears as 'first published from a facsimile of the original,' and with the note: 'The fly-leaf on which the post address would appear is lost, and the words which follow in brackets are torn from the edge which connected the fly-leaf.' It will be seen that the letter is supposed to be addressed to Gavin Hamilton. But its virtual identity with a letter to Robert Ainslie which appears in its proper place in this work (Vol. II., p. 343) places it under suspicion. And this apart from the reference to 'the great studies of your Profession'—which is not applicable to the Mauchline lawyer.

TO [GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ. (?)].

ELLISLAND, 14*th* [15*th*] *June* 1788.

This is now the third day, my dearest Sir, th[at I have] sojourned in these regions, and during these th[ree days] you have occupied more of my thoughts than i[n many] weeks preceding: in Ayrshire I have several [varia]tions of Friendship's Compass; here it points in[variab]ly to the Pole. My Farm gives me a good man[y] uncouth Cares and Anxieties, but I hate the language [of] Complaint—Job or some one of his friends says 'Why should a living man complain?'

What books are you reading or what is the subject of your thoughts, beside the great studies of your Profession? You said something about Religion in your last letter: I don't exactly remember what it was, as the letter is in Ayrshire, but I thought it not only prettily said but nobly thought.

Keep my old Direction, at Mauchline, till I inform myself of another.

Adieu! ROBT. BURNS.

No. II.—THE SUBSCRIPTION-LIST TO THE SECOND EDITION OF THE POEMS.

It says much for Burns's energy that within a few days of his arrival in Edinburgh he had set about the real purpose of his visit. He arrived in the capital on 28th November 1786; on 7th December he informed Gavin Hamilton that his 'subscription-bills come out to-morrow.'

The 'bills' seem to have been widely distributed. Scotland, almost 'frae Maidenkirk to Johnie Groat's,' was invited to subscribe for the new edition 'to be published for the sole benefit of the Author.' Edinburgh retained many of the subscription-bills; but friends in Ayrshire were not forgotten: Aiken, Ballantine, Chalmers, Hamilton, and Muir each received a parcel, and (the list of subscribers shows) made good use of them. The Earl of Glencairn—besides having been the means of the Caledonian Hunt subscribing for a hundred copies—sent a 'parcel to the Marquis of Graham, with downright orders to get them filled up with all the first Scottish names about Court. He has likewise wrote' (Burns says in a letter to Aiken) 'to the Duke of Montague, and is about to write to the Duke of Portland for their Graces' interest.' Dr Moore, in London, interested himself, but could procure only a dozen names: 'I have been trying to add to the number of your subscribers,' he informs the Poet, 'but find many of my acquaintances are already among them.' The name of Bishop Geddes does not appear in the list; but we know that it was through him that half-a-dozen Scots colleges in Spain each subscribed for a copy.

The list of subscribers (occupying 38 pages of the volume) for the 2876 copies is essentially a Scottish list: England claims only 100, of which 90 are from London; Ireland, Spain, and Jamaica each have a few. The remainder are Scottish; Edinburgh, naturally, claiming the large majority. Glasgow gets 200 copies; Ayr, 100; Paisley, 86; Greenock, 60. Very many of the provincial towns are represented: from Dumfries and Perth to Mauchline and Maybole.

'Obliged,' against his own wish (doubtless because of the needless expense), 'to print subscribers' names,' Burns seems to have troubled himself little about the list: he only took care to protect himself by adding that 'some subscriptions are not yet come to hand *and perhaps some have been mislaid.*' Subsequently, also, in writing to Pattison of Paisley, he confessed that the printed list was 'very incorrect.'

A mere list of names is generally dry-as-dust reading: such cannot be said of this list of 'subscribers' names.' To one who is in any way acquainted with the Life and Works of Burns the list is a most interesting one.

To begin with Burns's most intimate friends in the West, we find nearly all of them: Gilbert Burns, Mossgeel [*sic*], is there; so also are Robert Aiken and his son, the 'youthfu' frien',' Arnot of Dalquhatswood, and Ballantyne. Dalrymple of Orangefield takes 10 copies; Mrs Dunlop and two of her sons take a dozen among them; Farquhar Gray takes 2 copies; Gavin Hamilton, 4; Rev. George Lawrie, 1; Robert Muir, 'the disinterested friend of my early life,' takes 40; Dr M'Kenzie takes 2; William Muir of Tarbolton Mill, Niven of Maybole, and Parker of Asloss, 1 each; Prentice of Covington Mains is down for 20 copies. 'Rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine' of Adamhill, Reid of Barquharie, Ronald of Mauchline, 'Tam Samson' and his son, Charles, 'Winsome Willie' Simson of Ochiltree, 'guid auld Glen,' and the poet's '*quondam* printer, honest John' Wilson, also appear. 'Craigengillan,' one of his 'twa loosome kimmers,' and 'young Dunaskin's laird,' came too late, and find a place in the 'Addenda,' beside 'Willie Chalmers' and three of the Montgomeries of Coilsfield.

Edinburgh acquaintances also figure prominently. The University is represented by seven of its professors: Black, Blair, Dalzel (and Mrs Dalzel), Fergusson, Gregory, Hill, and Dugald Stewart; the High School by four of its masters: Rector Adam, Cruikshank, Nicol, and Louis Cauvin; Revs. Archibald Alison, Dr Blacklock, and William Greenfield are also present. The names of his more intimate friends are there: Ainslie, Cleghorn, Cunningham, Dunbar, Matthew Henderson, Allan Masterton (and his sister, 'Bonie Ann'), and John Richmond.

The nobility and gentry are well represented: the names include the Duke and Duchess of Argyll, Duke and Duchess of Buccleuch, and Duke of Roxburgh. The Duchess of Hamilton takes 1 copy; the Duchess of Gordon, 21. Others are the Marquis of Lorn, Earl and Countess of Buchan (8 copies), Earls of Cassilis, Dumfries, Errol, Kelly, Lauderdale, and Selkirk. The Earl of Eglinton had sent a present of ten guineas: the Poet could not accept it as a present, so credited the Earl with 42 copies. The Countess of Dumfries and the Countess of Sutherland take each a copy. Lords Cathcart, Daer, and Graham are also on the list. The Earl of Glencairn takes 8 copies; the Dowager-Countess, 16; Lady Betty Cunningham, 4. Sir Alexander Don and his 'divine lady' are down for 8 copies. Graham of Fintry takes 2; his namesake of Gartmore, 1. Sir James Hunter Blair and Sir William Murray of Ochtertyre take 8 copies each; Sir James Pringle and Lady Pringle, Sir John Stuart of Grandtully, Sir Patrick Warrender of Lochend, and Sir John Whitefoord and his lady also take copies.

As interesting also are the names of persons who have secured immortality through figuring in the Poems of Burns: 'Fair Burnet;' 'Miss S. Logan, Ayr,' is probably the 'Sentimental sister Susie' of the 'Epistle to Major Logan;' Miss Isabella M'Leod, 'the lovely Isabella;' and Mrs Oswald of Auchencruive, who afterwards inspired the fearful ode beginning 'Dweller in yon dungeon dark.' We find also Rev. John M'Math of Tarbolton—the 'guid M'Math'—and the

M'Quhae of St Quivox—'that curs'd rascal ca'd M'Quhae;' Dundas of Arniston, Lord President of the Court of Session, the subject of elegiac verses of which not 'the smallest notice was taken' by his eldest son, Mr Solicitor Dundas, who also appears on the list of subscribers. We find also Sir Adam Fergusson of Kilkerran—'aith-detesting, chaste Kilkerran;' Fullarton of Fullarton—'Brydone's brave ward;' Lord Advocate Sir Ilay Campbell—a 'true Campbell;' and 'Liviston, the bauld Sir Willie'—Sir William Augustus Cunningham of Livingstone.

Some names do not come within any of the classes named. Among them we find the notorious Braxfield; 'Adam Smith, Esq. LL.D., one of the Commissioners of Customs, 4 copies;' M'Murdo of Drumlanrig; the Rev. Mr Burnside of Dumfries; Sir Gilbert Elliott of Minto, who delivered the famous judgment on Burns; John Kennedy, factor at Dumfries House; Dr Moore; Miss Helen Maria Williams; and Alexander Fraser Tytler.

There are other names, too, which are conspicuous—by their absence. None of the Montrose relations are on the list; nor are many of the divines of Ayrshire: we miss 'D'rymple mild,' 'Doctor Mac,' and 'Goudie, terror o' the Whigs.' Those associated with the volume, too, are some of them present and others wanting. Creech and Scot—publisher and binder respectively—are there; but Smellie—the printer—is wanting. Beugo and Kirkwood—responsible for the portrait—are both there, but Nasmyth—the painter—is not. We are not surprised at Mrs M'Lehose's name being wanting, for she did not meet Burns for seven months after the issue of the edition; but it is surprising to find that 'The Man of Feeling,' William Tytler of Woodhouselee, and Peter Hill are not among the sixteen hundred and twenty-five.

No. III.—BURNS AND THE EXCISE.

Since Lockhart discovered from an examination of the Excise books that Burns never was reprimanded by his superiors at official headquarters for neglect of duty, much information all tending to confirm this view has been obtained. In particular, Mr James Macfadzean, now (1896) retired Collector of Inland Revenue, Glasgow, made a number of important discoveries in 1857. To quote his own words: 'On the removal of the Excise Office from Old Broad Street to Somerset House, it was found necessary to destroy—from want of storage-room—a miscellaneous collection of old books; in order, however, that nothing of permanent value should go to the paper-mill, I was entrusted with the duty of inspecting and preserving any papers likely to be of future use. While thus engaged, the Registers of the Edinburgh Board turned up: on discovering the information relating to Burns, I immediately obtained permission from Mr Dobson, the Excise Secretary, to make verbatim copies.' The results of these inquiries were dealt with in *Chambers's Journal* of March 22, 1875, under the title of 'Recent Discoveries regard-

ing Burns.' Since then they have been treated exhaustively by Dr James Adams, Glasgow; Mr John Sinton, Supervisor of Inland Revenue, Carlisle, in *Burns, Excise Officer and Poet—a Vindication;* and in the *Burns Chronicle* for 1896, by Mr R. W. Macfadzean, son of Mr James Macfadzean. Allusion has already been made to certain of these discoveries in the text of this volume. Burns's actual—and possible—career in the Excise may now be epitomised. In January 1788 he wrote to the Earl of Glencairn: 'I wish to get into the excise. I have weighed—long and seriously weighed—my situation, my hopes, and turn of mind, and am fully fixed to my scheme if I can possibly effectuate it.' Through the intervention of Dr Alexander Wood, his medical attendant, a definitive promise of an appointment was secured for him from Mr Graham of Fintry. In March 1788 he went to Tarbolton for a six weeks' course of 'instruction' under James Findlay, officer there, and received his commission. In 1789 he applied to Mr Graham for active employment, and probably in July or August was appointed to Dumfries First Itinerancy, with a salary of £50. As noted in the text, his name appears in the alphabetical Register of Official Characters: 'Never tryed; a poet,' with the subsequent interlineation by another hand, 'Turns out well.' His 'character' is in marked contrast to the records of other officers, such as 'indifferent, drinks;' 'a drucken creature;' 'a sober, weak officer;' 'can do, but drinks;' and 'a weak man, but sober.' On 28th July 1790 he was promoted to Dumfries Third Division, known as the tobacco division, and his salary raised from £50 to £70. On the 27th January 1791 he was placed on the 'Register of Persons Recommended for Examiner and Supervisor,' and his name remained on this list until his death—the word 'dead' being written in the column 'When appointed to the Office.' As his friend Findlater, who was 'recommended for Examiner and Supervisor' on 10th October 1786, was appointed examiner on 1st June 1790, and settled in Dumfries as supervisor on 14th April 1791, Burns might reasonably have expected promotion to the first office in 1795, and to the second in 1796. So far as can now be ascertained, he would at the latest—had he lived—have secured an examinership on 12th January 1797, and a supervisorship on 10th August of the same year. As things actually turned out, he was promoted to Dumfries First Division or Footwalk, including fourteen rides, on 26th April 1792. In that year Burns's 'character' is again entered in the official record as 'The Poet; does pretty well.' That was the year towards the end of which some 'scoundrel' denounced him as 'a person disaffected to the government.' Mr Corbet, a Surveying General Examiner, was sent down to Dumfries to make an inquiry into his political conduct. On the result of that inquiry, Burns wrote to Mr Erskine of Mar, on 13th April 1792, 'I have been partly forgiven; only I understand that all my hopes of getting officially forward are blasted.' Burns was mistaken, as he subsequently came to learn. His 'political conduct' may have prevented his promotion from being hastened, but certainly did not delay it. In 1794 he was appointed to act temporarily as supervisor in place of Find-

later, 'absent on sick leave,' and was acting in this capacity as late as March 1795. His view of a supervisorship is given in a letter to Heron, the Whig candidate for Kirkcudbright, in whose interests he wrote electioneering ballads: 'The business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a complete bar to every species of literary pursuit. I am on the supervisors' list, and as we come on there by precedency, I shall soon be at the head of that list and be appointed *of course*. *Then a friend* might be of service to me. . . . The moment I am appointed supervisor, in the common routine, I may be appointed on the collectors' list: and this is purely always a business of political patronage. A collector's salary varies from £300 to £800. They also come forward by precedency on the list, and have, besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure, with a decent competency is the summit of my wishes.'

Was Burns ever really censured or admonished for neglect of duty? On this Mr R. W. Macfadzean has written:

'Mr James Macfadzean says—"No." Among the books of the Scotch Excise Board found by him in a lumber room of Somerset House in 1867 was a *Register of Censures*, kept by the General Examiner at the head office, Edinburgh, covering the whole period of Burns's official career. He searched this record most minutely, and the Poet's name was "conspicuous by its absence." The accuracy of Mr Macfadzean's researches has recently been impugned on the grounds that two well-known and genuine diaries, which are still extant, show that Burns was *admonished*, once in 1792, and again in 1795. To the uninitiated it may be explained that an Excise diary is the official record of a supervisor's daily work, and contains, among other things, all the faults, trivial or serious, that he has been able to discover against his subordinates. Any Excise Officer of experience who examines these diaries sees at a glance that the complaints were of a trivial nature, and quite insufficient to affect any man's character, either private or official. An outsider may readily comprehend the nature of these when I say that the principal faults which brought on Burns these admonishments were only oversights or clerical mistakes. In the first instance, on 10th May 1792, Burns, in taking a trader's stock of green tea, entered 160 lbs. in his book, instead of 16 lbs., causing an apparent increase of 144 lbs., which error he himself rectified on his next visit. In the second instance, he neglected to visit a tanner, as he ought to have done, according to instructions, on the 25th May 1795, and Supervisor Findlater came in on the following day, and discovered the omission. These are the most heinous faults in the two diaries, the other items being characterised as trifling inadvertences; and the following extracts show clearly that an admonishment (or a mild reproof in Burns's time) was not registered at the head office at all until the year 1804.

'In a General Letter sent out by the Scotch Board, on 21st December 1803, occurs the following:—

'"An officer, assistant, or supernumerary reported by supervisor or col-

lector for a trivial fault shall be admonished either simply or sharply, with certification, and the number and nature of these admonishments is to be recorded by the General Examiner.

'"An officer, assistant, or supernumerary reported by collector or supervisor for a more serious offence shall be reprimanded either simply or sharply, with certification.

'"The Board have directed the General Examiner to keep an *exact record* of the number of reprimands given to each officer, and to acquaint the Board when a fourth reprimand, including the past, or a third reprimand in future cases, is ordered, that a minute of suspension may be made out, and sent with such last reprimand."

'The chief deduction to be drawn from these extracts is that, in 1803, admonishments had no cumulative effect, and it is also apparent that their registration in the books of the Head Office was now insisted upon for the first time. It soon became evident, however, that the mere registration of admonishments was a useless proceeding; and, in order to place them on a similar footing with reprimands, the following General Letter was promulgated on the 25th April 1806:—

'"By the Board's minute of the 22d April, it is determined that from and after the 5th day of July next, six admonishments shall be held equal to a reprimand, and the General Examiner is directed to keep an *exact record* of the number of admonishments issued to the several officers, and to acquaint the Board when a sixth one is ordered to any of them, reckoning from the above-mentioned period, that they may be converted into a reprimand, but it is to be understood that admonishments incurred previous to the 5th July next are not meant to be wiped out in considering the general character of officers; but, as with regard this new regulation, you will cause your Supervisors and Officers to enter a copy of this letter in their general letter books that none of them pretend ignorance. A. Pearson."

'Thus in 1806 admonishments had a cumulative effect for the first time. And the Excise Table of Discipline became

6 admonishments = 1 reprimand.
3 reprimands = 1 suspension.
2 suspensions = 1 dismissal.

'Further, in a General Letter of 2d October 1815, the following paragraph appears:—

'"When the appointment of an Examiner is to be made, the official character shall be examined of the three oldest Foot-walk officials who have made application for promotion, and served the preparatory period of seven years; reference being had to the dates of their respective commissions, and the officer against whom the fewest censures appear—*an admonishment not to be deemed a censure*—shall be appointed.

'"Every Foot-walk officer shall be eligible to the station of Examiner or supervisor at the end of *seven* years from the first appointment to a fixed charge instead of *nine* years as hertofore."

'This last extract shows conclusively that even in 1815 an admonishment was not reckoned a censure, and also that Burns's promotion was in no way delayed, as he had only been eight years in the Excise at the time of his death. Taking all these facts into consideration, no one will be surprised at Mr Macfadzean not finding Burns's two admonishments in the Register of Censures.'

On the same subject Mr Sinton has written :

'The business of an Excise officer of the period comprised an infinite number of minute details, any omission or deviation being necessarily entered by the supervisor in his diary as a "complaint." An abstract of these, and of his daily work, was handed by him to his collector every collecting round, which occurred eight times a year. Findlater's eighth round abstract,* extending from 8th June to 18th July 1795, bristled with the usual "complaints." Burns, as officer, and Stobie as assistant, were, at this period, in charge of Dumfries First Division. Most of the officers, including Stobie, had the usual quota of complaints. Burns had six for his share. They were all of similar import. The first three were :— "Hides, page 36. Notice to draw leather, May 25 m 7. But no account taken thereof, till my survey on the 26 e 6. Old Brewery Book, page 75, June 18 e 7. Second wort taken off by the assistant, but no second gauge thereof by the officer. Page 83, June 24. That brewing short charged one firkin, and 7·59 of a gallon." There were three other complaints of a similar character. Mr R. Chambers, who inspected this abstract, says :—"On the margin is 'admonish Mr Burns, A. D. Done J. C.' A. D. was the officer at the central Board by whom the abstract was registered." Assuming the genuineness of the marginal entries, the circumstances are of no importance. The following complaint appears in the same abstract against another officer :—"June 30; 80 lbs. tea credit; no permit. Officer says lost by accident." On the margin opposite this complaint there is a similar entry :—"Admonish Mr So-and-so, A. D. Done J. C." The Board certainly never sent Burns a recorded censure, and nothing short of such could delay an officer's promotion. Findlater, writing to *Johnston's Edinburgh Magazine*, from North Wellington Place, Glasgow, in February 1834, says :—"Had Burns been subjected to a Board's recorded censure, I must *ex-officio* have known of it, as it could not have been concealed from me; and I, therefore, consider the authority for what I have stated on this subject to be of the most unquestionable and decisive description, such, indeed, as nothing but the most obstinate prejudice will resist. All such censures are transmitted to the respective supervisors to be registered, and delivered to the officers, who must give written receipts for them."'

By way of supplement to these statements, it is only necessary to add that Findlater declared that 'no officer under him was more regular in

* This document or 'Round Diary' is now (1896) in the possession of Mr C. C. Maxwell, Dundee, and was exhibited in the Burns Exhibition at Glasgow. In it Burns's age is given as thirty-five and not as thirty-six, and he is represented as having eight of a family.

his duties than Burns,' that 'he was exemplary in his duties as an officer, and was jealous of the least imputation on his vigilance,' and finally, 'It was not till near the latter end of his days that there was any falling off in respect of his attention to business, and this was amply accounted for in the presence of disease and accumulating infirmities.' The only other authority as to Burns's manner of performing his duties as an Exciseman who can be placed beside Findlater is Collector Mitchell, and his opinion is embodied in 'Collector's Remarks' at the close of Findlater's observations as to Burns's 'errors' in 1792 already considered. 'Mr Burns has but lately taken charge of this Division, and from that cause and inexperience in the brewery branch of business has fallen into these errors, but promises and I believe will bestow due attention in future, which indeed he is very rarely deficient in.' Findlater's very emphatic views as to Burns's competency and loyalty as an Excise officer seem therefore to be absolutely confirmed.

No. IV.—SOME COLLECTIONS OF BURNS MSS.

THE GLENRIDDEL MSS.

Among the several collections of Burns MSS. throughout the kingdom, a foremost place has been given the Glenriddel Collection, to which frequent reference is made in the course of this work. Comprised in the two quarto volumes (each bound in calf, with the Glenriddel arms stamped on the boards) which either Burns or Riddel had procured for the purpose, the MSS. have found a permanent resting-place within the library of the Athenæum at Liverpool, to which institution they were presented by the daughter-in-law of Burns's second biographer. Dr Currie had obtained the volumes when engaged upon his *Life of Burns*, and had retained them when that work was completed. Mrs Currie's letter presenting the volumes to the Athenæum is inserted at the end of the volume of poetical pieces:

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE ATHENÆUM, LIVERPOOL.

Ellerslie, *December 6th*, 1853.

Sir—Will you allow me to make you the medium of presenting to the Athenæum Library two manuscript Books, in his own writing, of Poems and Letters of Burns?

I believe they came into possession of Dr Currie when he was engaged in writing the Life of the Poet; and I shall feel gratified by their finding a place in the library of an Institution in which he took so great an interest. I am, Sir, your obedient Servant, S. Currie.

Each of the volumes has a manuscript title; and in each is inserted an impression of the Beugo engraving of Burns. The volume of Letters

is entirely in Burns's autograph; the Poems are partly in his and partly in that of an amanuensis.

The following is a list of the pieces included in the volumes:

VOLUME I.—Poems* written by Mr Robt. Burns and Selected by him from his unprinted Collection for Robert Riddel, of Glenriddel, Esq.†

PREFACE.

As this Collection almost wholly consists of pieces local or unfinished, fragments the effusion of a poetical moment and bagatelles strung in rhyme simply *pour passer le temps*, the Author trusts that nobody into whose hands it may come will, without his permission, give, or allow to be taken, copies of any thing here contained; much less to give to the world at large what he never meant should see the light. At the Gentleman's request, whose from this time it shall be, the Collection was made; and to him, and, I will add, to his amiable Lady, it is presented, as a sincere, though small, tribute of gratitude for the many, many happy hours the Author has spent under their roof. *There*, what Poverty, even though accompanied with Genius, must seldom expect to meet with at the tables and in the circles of Fashionable Life, his welcome has ever been the cordiality of Kindness and the warmth of Friendship. As from the situation in which it is now placed, these MSS. may be preserved, and this Preface read, when the hand that now writes and the heart that now dictates it may be mouldering in the dust; let these be regarded as the genuine sentiments of a man who seldom flattered any, and never those he loved. Robt. Burns.

27th April 1791.

(1) Song—*Tune*, Bonie Dundee.

In Mauchline there dwells six proper young Belles.

(2) Song—

Anna, thy charms my bosom fire.

(3) Epistle to John Goldie, in Kilmarnock, Author of *The Gospel Recovered.*—'August 1785.'

O Gowdie, terror o' the Whigs.

(4) To Miss Jeany Cruikshank, a very young lady, only child of my much-esteemed friend, Mr Cruikshank of the High School, Edinburgh. Written on the blank leaf of a book presented to her by the Author.

Beauteous Rose-bud, young and gay.

* This volume includes a corrected copy of Burns's autobiographical letter of 2d August 1787 to Dr John Moore.

† Underneath the title are ten lines of poetry by Miss Helena Craik of Arbigland.

(5) Written in Friars' Carse Hermitage.

Thou whom chance may hither lead.

(6) On Captain Grose's peregrinations through Scotland, Collecting the Antiquities of that kingdom.

Hear, Land o' Cakes, and brither Scots.

(7) Ode to the departed Regency-bill, 1789.

Daughter of Chaos' doting years.

(8) Alteration of (5) ['Written in Friars' Carse Hermitage'].

Thou whom chance may hither lead.

(9) Song—*Tune*, Banks of Banna.

Yestreen I had a pint o' wine.

(10) Song—

I murder hate by field or flood.

(11) Holy Willie's Prayer.

O Thou that in the heavens does dwell!

(12) Epigram—On Captain F. Grose, Antiquarian.

The devil got notice that Grose was a-dying.

(13) Additional stanza to Song (9)—['Yestreen I had a pint o' wine'].

Awa, thou flaunting god o' day!

(14) Copy of a Letter from Mr Burns to Doctor Moore. [Autobiography, 2nd August 1787.]

(15) Tam o' Shanter—A Tale.

When chapmen billies leave the street.

(16) On the Death of Sir James Hunter Blair.

The lamp of day with ill-presaging glare.

(17) Written on the blank leaf of a Copy of the First Edition of my Poems, which I presented to an old Sweet-Heart, then married.

Once fondly lov'd, and still remember'd dear.

(18) On reading in a Newspaper the death of J. M'Leod, Esquire, brother to Miss Isabella M'Leod, a particular friend of the Author.

Sad thy tale, thou idle page.

(19) Epitaph on a Friend.

An honest man here lies at rest.

(20) The Humble Petition of Bruar Water to the Noble Duke of Athole.

My Lord, I know your noble ear.

(21) Extempore Epistle to Mr M'Adam of Craigengillan (wrote in Nanse Tinnock's, Mauchline), in answer to an obliging letter he sent in the commencement of my poetic career.

Sir, o'er a gill I gat your card.

(22) On scaring some Water-fowl in Loch-Turit, a wild scene among the hills of Oughtertyre.

Why, ye tenants of the lake.

(23) Written in the Hermitage at Taymouth.

Admiring Nature in her wildest grace.

(24) Written at the Fall of Fyers.

Among the heathy hills and ragged woods.

(25) Written by Somebody on the window of an inn at Stirling, on seeing the royal palace in ruins.

Here Stewarts once in triumph reign'd.

(26) Epistle to Robert Graham, Esq., of Fintry, on the Election for the Dumfries string of Boroughs, Anno 1790.

Fintry, my stay in worldly strife.

(27) A Poet's welcome to his love-begotten daughter, the first instance that entitled him to the venerable appellation of Father.

Thou 's welcome, Wean! Mischanter fa' me.

(28) The Five Carlins—A Ballad.

There was five Carlins in the South.

(29) Extempore, nearly—On the birth of Monsieur Henri, posthumous child to a Monsieur Henri, a gentleman of family and fortune from Switzerland, who died in three days' illness, leaving his lady, a sister of Sir Thos. Wallace, in her sixth month of this her first child. The Lady and her Family were particular friends of the Author. The child was born in November 1790.

Sweet Floweret, pledge o' meikle love.

(30) Birthday Ode—31*st December* 1787.

Afar th' illustrious Exile roams.

(31) Ode—sacred to the memory of Mrs Oswald of Auchencruive.

Dweller in yon dungeon dark.

(32) Extempore—to Mr Gavin Hamilton.

To you, Sir, this summons I 've sent.

(33) Lament of Mary Queen of Scots.

Now Nature hangs her mantle green.

(34) Epistle to Robert Graham, Esqr., of Fintry, requesting a favor.

When Nature her great Masterpiece designed.

(35) Jeremiah, 15th Chapter, 10th Verse.

Ah, woe is me, my Mother dear!

(36) From Clarinda, on Mr B[urns]'s saying that he had 'nothing else to do.'

When first you saw Clarinda's charms.

(37) Answer to the foregoing—Extempore.

When dear Clarinda, matchless fair.

(38) On the death of the late Lord President Dundas.

Lone on the bleaky hills, the straying flocks.

(39) The Whistle—A Ballad.

I sing of a whistle, a whistle of worth.

(40) A new Psalm for the Chapel of Kilmarnock, on the thanksgiving-day for His Majesty's recovery.

O, sing a new song to the L——!

(41) A Ballad—On the Heresy of Dr M'Gill in Ayr.

Orthodox, Orthodox, wha believe in John Knox.

(42) To Robert Graham, Esq., of Fintry, on receiving a favor.

I call no goddess to inspire my strains.

(43) Written in a wrapper inclosing a Letter to Captain Grose, to be left with Mr Cardonnel, Antiquarian. —*Tune*, Sir John Malcolm.

Ken ye ought o' Captain Grose?

(44) A Fragment—On Glenridel's Fox breaking his chain.

Thou, Liberty, thou art my theme.

(45) Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn.

The wind blew hollow frae the hills.

(46) Epistle to Robert Graham, Esq., of Fintry.—*5th October* 1791.

Late crippled of an arm, and now a leg.

(47) Lines to Sir John Whitefoord, of Whitefoord, with the Poem to the Memory of Lord Glencairn.

Thou, who thy honor as thy God rever'st.

(48) A Grace before dinner—Extempore.

O Thou, who kindly dost provide.

(49) Epigram—On being asked why God had made Miss Davies so little and Mrs ——— so big.

Ask why God made the gem so small.

(50) Epigram—On hearing it said that there was falsehood in Dr Babington's very looks.

That there is falschood in his looks.

(51) Epigram—On Captain W. Ruddock of Corbiston.

Light lay the earth on Billy's heart.

(52) Epigram—On W. Graham, Esq., of Mosskin.

'Stop, thief!' dame Nature called to Death.

(53) Epigram—On Captain Lascelles.

When Lascelles thought fit from this world to depart.

(54) Epigram—Pinned to Mrs Walter Riddel's carriage.

If you rattle along like your Mistress's tongue.

(55) Epitaph—On John Bushby.

Here lies John Bushby, *honest man!*

(56) Epitaph—On John Morine, laird of Laggan.

When Morine, deceased, to the devil went down.

(57) Epitaph—On the Laird of Cardoness.

Bless Jesus Christ, O Cardoness.

[The (at that time) unpublished pieces in this volume were given verbatim by Henry A. Bright in *The Glenriddel MSS. of Burns's Poems* (1874).]

VOLUME II.—Letters by Mr Burns, which he selected for R. Riddel, Esqr., of Glenriddel, F.A.S. of London and Edinburgh, and member of the Literary and Philosophical Society at Manchester.

(1) To Willam Nicol. [Carlisle, *June* 1, 1787.]
(2) To John Arnot of Dalquhatswood. [*April* 1786.]
(3) To Charles Sharpe of Hoddam. [*April* 1791.]
(4) To Alexander Cunningham. [24*th January* 1789.]
(5) To Mrs Stewart of Stair. [*September* 1786.]
(6) To Miss Wilhelmina Alexander. [18*th November* 1786.]
(7) To John M'Murdo. [*9th January* 1789.]
(8) First Common-place Book [*Abridged*].
(9) To the Right Honourable William Pitt, Esquire. [*February* 1789.]
(10) To Miss M'Murdo. [*July* 1793.]
(11) To the Earl of Glencairn. [*February* 1787.]
(12) To Craufurd Tait. [15*th October* 1790.]
(13) To Miss Helena Craik. [*August* 1790.]
(14) To John Francis Erskine of Mar. [13*th April* 1793.]

(15) To Alexander Cunningham. [10*th September* 1792.]
(16) To Mr Corbet. [*October* 1791.]
(17) To the Rev. William Moodie. [*June* 1791.]
(18) To Alexander Cunningham. [11*th June* 1791.]
(19) Letter dictated for James Clarke to the Lord Provost of Edinburgh. [*June* 1791.]
(20) To William Smellie. [22*nd January* 1792.]
(21) To Mr Corbet. [*September* 1792.]
(22) Letter for Mr Clarke to send to Mr Williamson. [*June* 1791.]
(23) To the Duke of Queensberry. [*October* 1789.]
(24) From William Nicol to Robert Burns. [10*th February* 1793.]
(25) Reply: To William Nicol. [20*th February* 1793.]
(26) To Mrs M'Lehose. [*March* 1793.]
(27) To Miss Lesley Baillie. [*May* 1793.]

THE AFTON MSS.

The 'Afton' MSS. are contained in a small quarto volume of sixty-eight pages, sewn in limp boards and (now) enclosed in a morocco case. They have found a permanent resting-place in the cottage at Alloway, to which they were gifted (on 22d September 1880) by William Allason Cunninghame, grandson of Mrs Stewart of Stair and Afton, to whom they were presented by Burns about 1791. That lady's book-plate is on the volume, which bears inscription by Burns: 'To Mrs General Stewart of Afton—The first person of her sex and rank that patronised his humble lays, this manuscript collection of Poems is presented, with the sincerest emotions of grateful respect, by The Author;' and on the first fly this preface: 'Many Verses on which an Author would by no means rest his reputation, in print, may yet amuse an idle moment, in manuscript; and many Poems, from the locality of the subject, may be unentertaining or unintelligible to those who are strangers to that locality. Most of, if not all, the following Poems are in one or other of these predicaments; and the Author begs whoever into whose hands they may fall, that they will do him the justice not to publish what he himself thought proper to suppress. R. B.'

A list of the poems follows:

(1) A Mother's Lament for the loss of her only Son.
(2) Tam o' Shanter—A Tale.
(3) Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson—A gentleman who held the Patent for his Honors immediately from Almighty God; [followed by] The Epitaph.
(4) The Lament of Mary Queen of Scots—A Ballad.
(5) Written in the Hermitage at Friars' Carse.
(6) The five Carlins—A Ballad—*Tune*, Chevy Chase. Written during the contested Election, between Sir James Johnstone and Captain Miller, for the Dumfries district of Boroughs.

(7) Epistle to Robert Graham, Esquire, of Fintry, on the close of the disputed Election, between Sir James Johnstone and Captain Miller, for the Dumfries district of Boroughs.
(8) Alteration of the Verses, Page 27 ['Written in the Hermitage at Friars' Carse'].
(9) Sweet Afton—A Song.
(10) Craigieburn-wood—A Song.
(11) Poem On Sensibility—To a Friend.
(12) On seeing a wounded hare limp by me which a fellow had just shot at.
(13) A Fragment, which was meant for the beginning of an Elegy on the late Miss Burnet of Monboddo.

LIST OF THE PIECES INSERTED IN BISHOP GEDDES'S INTERLEAVED COPY OF THE FIRST EDINBURGH EDITION OF THE POEMS.

(1) On Reading in a Newspaper the Death of John M'Leod, Esq., brother to Miss Isabella M'Leod, a particular friend of the Author's.
(2) On the Death of Sir J. Hunter Blair.
(3) Written on the blank leaf of [a copy of] my first edition, which I presented to an old Sweetheart, then married: I was on the tiptoe for Jamaica.
(4) An Epitaph on a Friend.
(5) The Humble Petition of Bruar Water to the Noble Duke of Athole.
(6) On the Death of Robert Dundas of Arniston, Esq., late Lord President of the Court of Session.
(7) On seeing some Water-fowl in Loch Turrit, a wild scene among the hills of Oughtertyre.
(8) Written at the Hermitage at Taymouth.
(9) Written at the Fall of Foyers.
(10) Written in Friars' Carse Hermitage, on the banks of Nith, June 1788.
(11) The same, altered from the foregoing, December 1788.
(12) To Robert Graham, of Fintry, Esq., accompanying a request.

No. V.—VARIATIONS IN TEXT OF POEMS.

Pages 19, 20.—'ELEGY ON THE YEAR 1788.'

Line 11—teugh = sair.
" 12—*read*, And 'tween our Maggie's twa wee cocks.
" 15—*read*, The tither 's something dour o' treadin'.
" 28—dowie now = daiviely.
" 30—Embro = E'nburgh.
" 35—mizl'd = muzzl'd; hap-shackl'd = half-shackl'd.

Pages 56, 57.—'Ode Sacred to the Memory of Mrs Oswald.'

Between lines 13 and 14—*insert*,

The Great despised her and her wealth;
The Poor man breathed a curse by stealth.

Line 20—hurl'd = kicked.

Pages 61–63.—'Ode to the Departed Regency-Bill, 1789.'

Page 61, line 4—rights = rites.
" 62, " 11—lessen'd = lightened.
" " 20—strife = war.

Page 62, between lines 20 and 21—*insert*,

By Opposition's eager hand
Grasping at an airy wand.

Page 63, line 2—native = regal.
" " 9—sore-prest = sore-vex'd.
" " 15—*read*, Hark, how they lift the joy-elated voice.
" " 15 *et seq.*—*read*,

And who are these that equally rejoice?
Jews, Gentiles, what a motley crew!
The iron tears their flinty hearts bedew,
See how unfurled the parchment ensigns fly,
And Principal and Interest all the cry.

Pages 92–95.—'The Kirk's Alarm.'

Our text is from the MS. in the Burns Monument at Edinburgh.
Verse 1, line 1—Orthodox, orthodox = Brother Scots, brother Scots.
" " 3—There 's a = A.
" 2, " 1—stretch = streek.
" " 2—evil-doers = wicked writers.
" 3, " 1—rash = mad.
" " 2—wi' = in.
" 5, " 4, 5—a storehouse = storehouses.
" 6, " 3—lug out = out wi'.
" 8, " 2—danger awaits = evils await.
" " 4, 5—*read*, For the foul thief is just at your gate.
" 9, " 4, 5—*read*, Ye but smelt, man, the place, &c.
" 11, " 1—Jamie Goose = Billy Goose; but = a.
" " 2—O' = In.
" 12, " 2—It 's a sign they 're = The core is.
" —in Glenriddel MS. *reads*,

Davie Rant, Davie Rant, wi' a face like a saunt,
And a heart that wad poison a hog;
Raise an impudent roar, like a breaker lee-shore,
Or the Kirk will be tint in a bog.

Verse 13, line 1—Cessnock-side = Irvine-side.
" " 3—maun = will.
" " 4, 5—*read*,
And your friends they daur grant ye nae mair.
" 14, lines 1, 2—*read*,
. . . made a rock
To crush common-sense for her sins.
" " 4—*read*, To confound the poor Doctor at ance.
" 15, " 3—*Omit*, Tho'; yet = but.
" 16, " 4—*read*, But tho' ye can't bite, ye may bark.
" 17, " 3—*Omit*, Tho'.
" " —Yet were she even tipsy = E'en tho' she were tipsy.

Pages 106–108.—'THE WHISTLE.'

Burns's first draft, containing five stanzas, is now in the National Portrait Gallery at Edinburgh. Stanzas 1 and 4 are as printed in the text, the others are:

(2) Old Loda, still rueing the arm of Fingal,
The god of the bottle sends down from his hall;
'This whistle 's your challenge—blow till their last breath,
And since we can't fight 'em, let 's drink 'em to death.'

(3) What champions ventur'd—what champions fell,
Old Poets have sung, and old chronicles tell;
The son of great Loda was conqueror still,
And blew on the whistle their requiem shrill.

(5) Thus Walter, victorious, the trophy has gain'd;
That now in his house has for ages remain'd;
Till three noble Chieftains, and all of his blood,
Have lately the jovial contest renew'd.

The MS. presented by Burns to Craigdarroch, the hero of the contest, is now in possession of the Earl of Rosebery. It bears inscription, 'To Mr Fergusson of Craigdarroch, a small but sincere mark of highest respect and esteem, from THE AUTHOR.'

Verse 1, line 3—*read*, Which was brought, &c.
" 4, " 3—He = Had.
" 6, " 3—skill'd = versed.
" 8, " 3—'Rorie More:' The following note appears in *The Star* (London), in which the poem appeared on 2nd November 1791, 'fresh from his fertile pen:'

'Rorie More—a Chieftain of the M'Leod Family, mentioned in Dr Johnson's *Tour to the Hebrides*, who kept a horn of a quart measure in his Hall, which those who aspired to a connexion with his Clan were compelled to drink off at a draught, in proof of their belonging to his doughty race.'

Verse 8, line 4—o'er = more.
" 9, " 1—would = could.
" " 4—ere = or.
" 10, " 2—of = both.
" 11, " 3—sadness = sorrow.
" 12, " 1—being = now.
" " 2—is = was.
" " 3—so = well.
" 13, " 1—as = till.
" " 4—see = find.
" 14, " 3—in = at.
" " 4—ancestors = ancestor.
" 16, " 3—should = shall.
" 17, " 1—our = the.
" " 3—would = would'st.
" 18, " 1—have = has.
" " 3—laurel = laurels. The version in *The Star* reads—
'So thine be the Whistle and mine be the bay.'

Pages 115–117.—'On Captain Grose's Peregrinations thro' Scotland.'

Verse 3, line 1—By = At.
" 7, " 2—Auld = And.
" 8, " 1, 2—*read*, Besides, he 'll cut you aff fu' gleg
The shape of Adam's philabeg.
" " 3—nicket = cuttet.
" " 5—It was = If 'twas.

Pages 130–133.—'The Five Carlins.'

Verse 4, line 3—whisky = brandy.
" 6, " 4—That = This.
" 8, " 2—band = clan.
" " 4—withstand = withstan'.
" 9, " 3—about the court = at London court.
" 10, " 1—*read*, The niest ane was a Sodger-boy.
" " 2—Wha = And.
" " 3—gae = gang.
" 12, " 1—Then = Now.
" 13, " 1—out = up.
" " 2—up = out.
" " 3—youth = lad; boy.
" 15, —*read*,

Then up sprang * Bess o' Annandale,
And swore a deadly aith:
Says 'I will send the Border Knight,
Spite o' you Carlins baith.'

* One MS.—'started.'

Verse 16, line 3—this = the.
" " " 4—*omit*, And.
" 17, " 1—frae = o'.
" 18, " 1—prate = freit ; chat.
" 20, " 1—caup = cup.
" " " 3—be said o' = be sae wi'.
" " " 4—We 'll = I 'll.
" 21, " 4—bluid = heart.
" 22, " 4—like = loe.
" —*read*, The London court set light by me,
I set as light by them ;
And I will send the Soger lad
To shaw that court the same.
" 23, " 1—Sae = Then.
" " " 4—himsel = themsel.

Pages 143, 144.—'PROLOGUE FOR MR SUTHERLAND.'

The following readings are from an MS. (evidently an early one) in possession of Mr James Lenox, Dumfries.

Page 143, line 9—grave = good.
" 144, " 2, 3—*read*,
Who trust to win your way by dint of merit,
To you the Sage has ever much to say.
" line 6—ever = more than.
" " " 8—hold = way.
" after line 16—*read*,
For our sincere, tho' haply, poor, endeavor
To try at least to win your honor'd favor ;
For Gratitude and other weighty reasons,
To please you be our task all times and seasons ;
And howsoe'er our tongues may ill reveal it,
Believe our glowing, grateful bosoms feel it.

Pages 150, 151.—'SECOND PROLOGUE FOR MR SUTHERLAND.'

Line 4—whisky = brandy.
" 6—*read*, Will bauldly trig to gie us, &c.
" 17—here, even here = on this spot.
" 23—all = ev'n.
" 26—*read*, To glut that direst foe—a vengeful woman.
" 28—cruel = wicked.
" 51—hope = trust.
" 52—a' the = gen'rous.
" 53—sets = sorts.

Pages 171, 172.—'THE GOWDEN LOCKS OF ANNA.'

Verse 2, line 1—The hungry Jew = The Israelite.
" 3, " 4—melting = lovely.

Verse 4, lines 3, 4—*read*, While rapt, encircled in her arms,
I, speechless, gaze on Anna!

Pages 182–187.—'SECOND EPISTLE TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.'

Verse 6, line 1—*read*, How shall I sing Drumlanrig's Grace.
" 8, " 3—*read*, Of fiddles, whores and hunters.
" " 4—winning = buying.
" " 6—carlins—bunters.
" 9, " 1—Combustion = Confusion.
" " 4—Buff and Blue = Blue and Buff.
" 11, " 3—banner = banners.
" " 6—honor = honors.
" 12, " 5—sub-rosa = all-conquering.
" 14, " 4—*read*, And Welsh, who ne'er yet flinch'd his ground.
" 16, " 5—furious = headlong.
" " 6—furious = raging.
" 17, " 1—or = what.
" 24, " 1—melts for = wails the.
" 25, " 5—sing = shout.
" 26, " 2—*read*, He hears and sees the distant war.
" 27, " 2—native = dear-lov'd.
" " 6—And = To.

Pages 190–192.—'ELEGY ON CAPTAIN MATTHEW HENDERSON.
Verse 2, lines 3–6—*read*,

Thee, Matthew, woods and wilds shall mourn
Wi' a' their birth;
For whunstane Man to grieve wad scorn
For poor, plain Worth.

" 4, lines 3–6—*read*, At toddlin leisure,
Or o'er the linns, wi' hasty stens,
Flinging your treasure.

" 7, " 3–5—*read*, Ye curlews, skirlin thro' a clud,
Ye whistlin pliver;
And mourn, ye birrin' paitrick brood.

" 8, " 6—Rair = Rowte.
" 10, " 2—eldritch = aulder.
" 11, " 2—canty = rustic.
" " 6—Maun = Must.

Pages 212–220.—'TAM O' SHANTER.'

Page 214, lines 2, 3—*read*, The landlady grew unco gracious.
Wi' secret favours, sweet and precious.
" " 7—mind = care.
" " 26—taks = took.

Page 215, line 8—some = an.
" 217, " 21—which = that.
" 218, after line 2—*insert*,

Three Lawyers' tongues, turn'd inside out,
Wi' lies seam'd like a beggar's clout;
Three Priests' hearts, rotten, black as muck,
Lay stinking, vile, in every neuk.*

" 218, line 30—held = kept.
" 219, " 3—kend = thought.
" " 6—Wad = Should.
" " 16—tint = lost.
" " 28—skreech and hollow = shout and hollo.
" 220, " 10—wist = kend.
" " 16—Ilk = Each.

Pages 234–236.—'LAMENT OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.'

Verse 1, line 2—blooming = spreading.
" " 7—weary = carefu'.
" 2, " 4—woodland = a' the.
" 3, " 6—their = these; thae.
" 4, " 7—Yet = But.
" 6, " 5—*read*, Heaven shield thee from thy mother's faes.
" 7, " 3, 4—*read*, Nae mair the winds of autumn wave
Across† the yellow corn.
" " 5—And = But.
" " 6—round = o'er.
" " 8—on = o'er.

Pages 247–249.—'LAMENT FOR JAMES, EARL OF GLENCAIRN.'

Verse 1, line 1—wind = winds.
" " 2—departing = descending.
" 2, " 3—with = by.
" " 4—hoary = aged.
" 4, " 3—But = And.
" 7, " 3—thy = my.
" " 8—brought from = brought'st frae.
" 9, " 8—Which = That.
" 10, " 5—child = bairn.
" " 7, 8—*read*, But I'll remember good GLENCAIRN,
And a' that he has done for me.

Pages 267–269.—'THIRD EPISTLE TO GRAHAM OF FINTRY.'
Page 267, line 3—dejected = neglected.
" " 12—*read*,
The horned bull tremendous spurns the ground.

* See *ante*, p. 256.

† One MS.—'Out o'er.'

Page 267, line 14—Th' envenom'd = The poisonous.
" " 21, 22—*read*,
Even silly women have defensive arts,
Their eyes, their tongue—and nameless other parts.
" " 25—world's = worldly.
" " 32—rich = fat.
" 268, line 4—scorpion = viper.
" " 9—causeless wanton—wanton causeless.
" " 12—miscreants = wretches.
" " 14—flounders = flounces.
" " 30—*read*,
Conscious their high desert they well deserve ; *or*
Conscious their great success they well deserve.
line 32—grave sage hern = sage grave hern.
" 269, " 18—Fintry = My Friend.

END OF VOLUME III.

Edinburgh:
Printed by W. & R. Chambers, Limited.